

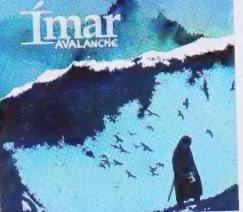


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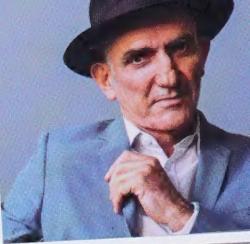
Reviews

Tímar

"An accomplished ...
deeply talented band."

Paul Kelly

"I came up playing old-time
music and folk music. It's
the DNA of a lot of
my songs."



penguin eggs



baaba maal
che apalache
sultans of string
m prince

ML
5
P46
no.85
2020

HSS

nkum

ken whiteley
afro-métis nation
michael doucet
é-t-é

Issue No. 85 Spring 2020 \$5.99





100 MILE HOUSE

LOVE AND LEAVE YOU (VINYL, CD, DIGITAL)

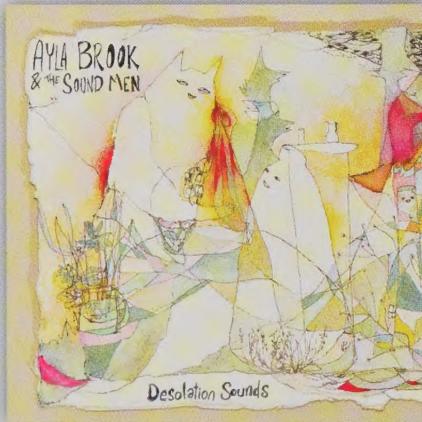
Attuned to life's impermanence, **100 mile house** cherish what they have, yet accepts that eventually it will all be gone, on their first album since 2016's *Hiraeth*. Playing Edmonton and Calgary in April.



JOE NOLAN

DRIFTERS (VINYL, CD, DIGITAL – MAY 8)

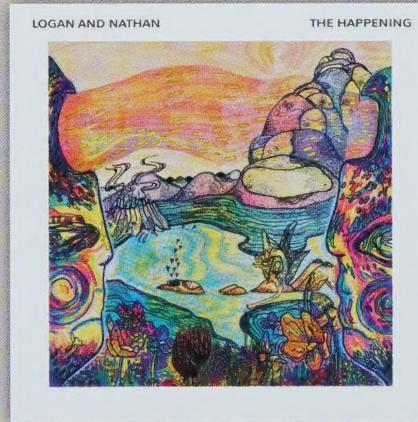
Down to the bone, predominantly acoustic, roots-rock from Canadian savant. *Drifters* is ten songs of longing, wanderlust and lost love. Playing with Charlie Musselwhite in Toronto on May 15.



AYLA BROOK & THE SOUND MEN

DESOLATION SOUNDS (VINYL, CD, DIGITAL)

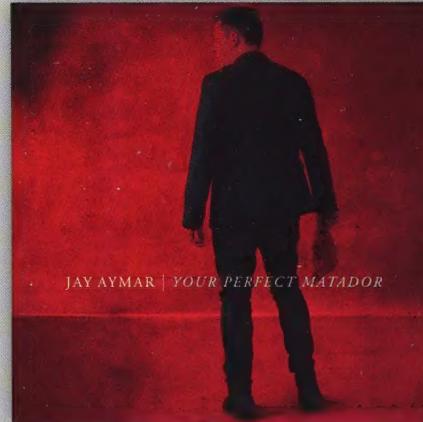
A tapestry of hurtin' and feelin' tunes about life on and off Canada's barstools. Produced by Terra Lightfoot. Mixed by Jon Auer.



LOGAN AND NATHAN

THE HAPPENING (VINYL, CD, DIGITAL – APRIL 24)

An urgent freak-folk, soul-infused dance that colours the disenchanted black-and-white world we inhabit. Features Rex Smallboy.



JAY AYMAR

YOUR PERFECT MATADOR (CD, DIGITAL)

Toronto's **Jay Aymar** adorns the colossal battles between love and art, with a poet's sense of right and wrong.

DON'T MISS:

- VIVIENNE WILDER — POSTROMANTIC (COMING JUNE)
- JON BROOKS — MOTH NOR RUST II (ON TOUR)
- SILENT WINTERS (ON TOUR)
- JESSICA HEINE — GOODBYE PARTY



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Canada

Cover Story

38 Lankum

They're at the forefront of a new Irish wave of traditional musicians flush with modern intensity.

Features

18 Sultans of String

Their latest epic project, *Refuge*, focuses on the harsh realities that face many impoverished immigrants.

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They're a beguiling combo of all that's good in acoustic music with influences from Argentina to Appalachia.

24 Linda & Joe Byrne

From song collecting to recordings, they inspired a whole new generation of Newfoundland's traditional musicians.

26 Michael Doucet

He has led the revival in Cajun music for 30-odd years, and now he pushes the perimeters with a solo album.

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Since their debut in 2017, Québécois trio continues to impress trad' fans with their unique, acoustic sounds.

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His podcasts have made Apple Music's charts. Not bad for a series of historical programs about Canadian folk music.

32 Baaba Maal

He made the soundtrack for the movie *The Black Panther*, but he uses his status largely to campaign for human rights.

34 Afro-Métis Nation

This diverse group of four musicians and a poet recorded a no-holds-barred album to honour their ancestors.

36 Ken Whiteley

After five decades mining the folk and blues traditions, he remains curious as a musician and one with a youthful heart.

Photo: Che Apalache



folk

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The Penguin Eggs Interview: Australia's most audacious and literate songwriter discusses his extraordinary 35-year career.

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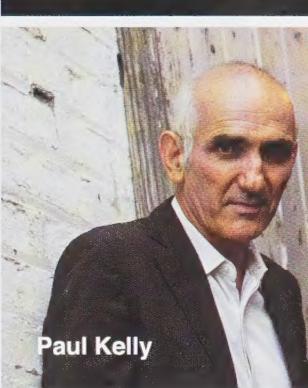
Tony Montague celebrates Black culture and its indelible contributions to various forms of folk and roots music.



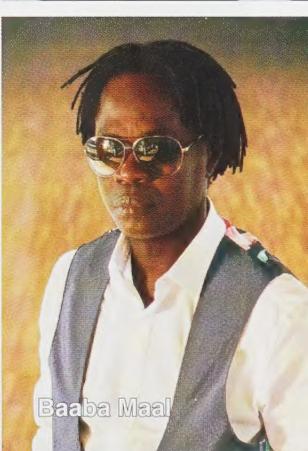
Sultans of String



Michael Doucet



Paul Kelly



Baaba Maal



É-T-É



Dayna Manning



SIRIUSXM WORLD GROUP OF THE YEAR

3 X JUNO AWARD NOMINEES

NY TIMES HIT LIST!

BILLBOARD TOP 10!

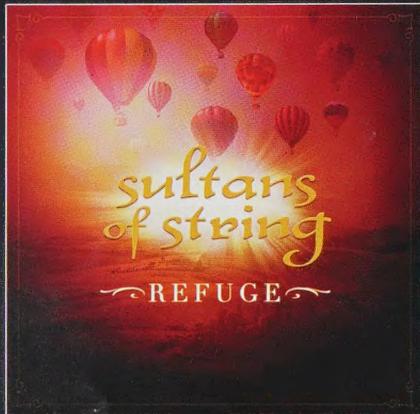
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Maverick Music Magazine, UK

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WestJet

stingray radio

1. Tim Grimm
Heart Land Agaian (Vault Records)
2. Cej Adobe Road
Gnosong (Independent)
3. Ordinary Elephant
Honest (Berkalin)
4. Sussex
The Ocean Wide (Lucky Bear)
5. Dori Freeman
Every Single Star (Blue Hens Music)
6. The O'Pears
Stay Warm (Independent)
7. Dave Gunning
Up Against The Sky (Fontana North)
8. James Gordon
The Heritage Hall Sessions (Borealis)
9. Lisa Bastoni
How We Want To Love (Sweet Ondine)
10. Gathering Sparks
All That's Real (Borealis)

The most-played folk and roots discs played nationally by Stingray Music throughout Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020.

fred's

1. Rum Ragged
The Thing About Fish (Independent)
2. The Once
Time Enough (Borealis)
3. Punters
Atlantic Stars (Avondale)
4. Rum Ragged
Hard Times (Independent)
5. Brad Tuck
The Rocky Isle (Independent)

Based on album sales for Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020, at Fred's Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. Johns, NL, A1C 1G5



chris mckhool's top 10



Rebecca Campbell
Tug (Independent)

Bob Dylan
Desire (Columbia)

Hugh Marsh
Songs For My Mother and Father (Cool Papa Music)

Humair Louiss Ponty
Trio HLP (Dreyfus Jazz)

Shankar
Pancha Nadai Pallavi (ECM)

Turtle Island String Quartet
Who Do We Think We Are? (Windham Hill)

Wayové
Nova Caribe (Soma Records)

Whitehorse
Leave No Bridge Unburned (Six Shooter Records)

Willie & Lobo
Live in Concert (Narada)

Neil Young
Live Rust (Reprise)

Chris McKhool leads the Sultans of String and is quoted extensively in our feature on page 18 about their remarkable new project.

blackbyrd

1. Andy Shauf
The Neon Skyline (Caracol)
2. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings
King of this Town (Warners)
3. Drive by Truckers
The Unravelling (ATO)
4. Haden Triplets
Family Songbook (Trimeter Records)
5. Gene Clark
No Other (4AD)
6. Purple Mountains
Purple Mountains (Drag City)
7. Xylouris White
The Sisypherals (Drag City)
9. Sudan Archives
Athena (Stones Throw)
9. Arthur Russell
Iowa Dream (Audika Records)
10. Celeigh Cardinal
Stories from a Downtown Apartment (Independent)

Based on album sales for Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020, at Blackbyrd Myoozik, 10442-82 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6E 2A2-end at Jan-17 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T2T 0B4

highlife

1. Leonard Cohen
Thanks For The Dance (Sony)

2. Makaya McCraven
Universal Beings (International Anthem)

3. Michael Kiwanuka
Kiwanuka (Universal)

4. The Specials
Encore (Universal)

5. Rhiannon Giddens
There Is No Other (Nonesuch)

6. Brittany Howard
Jaime (ATO)

7. Tinariwen
Amadjar (Anti)

8. Various Artists
The Time For Peace Is Now (Luaka Bop)

9. Bettye Lavette
Things Have Changed (Verve)

10. The Band
50th Anniversary (Capitol)

Based on album sales for Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020, at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5



backstreet

1. Leonard Cohen
Thanks For The Dance (Sony)

2. Sturgill Simpson
Sound & Fury (Elektra)

3. Old Man Luedecke
Easy Money (True North)

4. Jessica Rhaye
Just Like A Woman (Scout Music Group)

5. Orville Peck
Pony (Royal Mountain)

6. Catherine MacLellan
Coyote (IDLA)

7. Purple Mountains
Purple Mountains (Drag City)

8. Our Native Daughters
Songs of Our Native Daughters (Smithsonian Folkways)

9. Jeremy Dutcher
Wolastoqiyuk Lintuwakonawka (Independent)

10. The Small Glories
Assiniboine & The Red (Red House)

Based on album sales for Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020, at Backstreet Records, at their Saint John and Fredericton, NB, stores.

10 years ago

1. Joanna Newsom
Have One On Me (Drag City)

2. Alex Cuba
Alex Cuba (Caracol)

3. Rosanne Cash
The List (EMI)

4. Monsters of Folk
Monsters of Folk (Warners)

5. Timber Timbre
Timber Timbre (Arts & Crafts)

6. Oumou Sangare
Seya (Nonesuch)

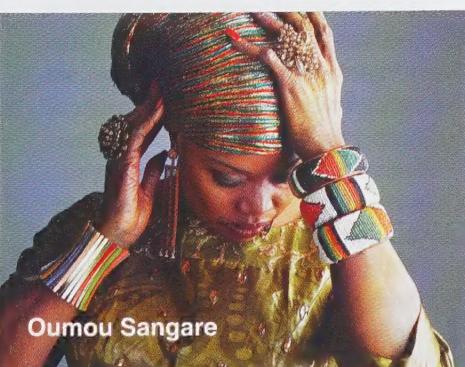
7. Fred Pellerin
Silence (Independent)

8. Karla Anderson
Brand New Day (Independent)

9. Ali Farka Toure & Toumani Diabate
Ali and Toumani (World Circuit)

10. The Once
The Once (Independent)

Based on album charts from Penguin Eggs issue No. 45, published in the spring of 2010.



Oumou Sangare

ckua radio

1. Emily Triggs
Middletown (Independent)

2. BMW
Catfish (Cayuse)

3. Lakou Mizik
HaitiaNola (Cumbancha)

4. nêhiyawak
nipiy (Arts & Crafts)

5. Wilco
Ode To Joy (dBpm)

6. Stephen Fearing
The Unconquerable Past (Fearing and Loathing)

7. Barry Allen
Speed of Dark (Royalty)

8. Leonard Cohen
Thanks For The Dance (Sony)

9. Matt Patershuk
If Wishes Were Horses (Black Hen)

10. Sudan Archives
Athena (Stones Throw)

11. Coco Love Alcorn
Rebirth (Independent)

12. Joe Nolan
Rootsy House Sessions (Independent)

13. Thorbjorn Risager
Come On In (Ruf)

14. Van Morrison
Three Chords And The Truth (Caroline)

15. Alex Cuba
Sublime (Caracol)

16. Andy Shauf
The Neon Skyline (Caracol)

17. Catherine MacLellan
Coyote (Independent)

18. Sean Burns And Lost Country
A Bakersfield Half-Dozen (Stringbreakin')

19. The Lonesome Ace Stringband
Modern Old-Time Sounds ... (Independent)

20. Mercy Bell
Mercy Bell (Independent)

The most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA radio – www.ckua.org – throughout Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020.

soundscapes

1. Leonard Cohen
Thanks For The Dance (Sony)

2. Bob Dylan
Bootleg Series Vol.15: Travelin' Thru 1967-69 (Columbia)

3. Michael Kiwanuka
Kiwanuka (Universal)

4. Van Morrison
Three Chords And The Truth (Caroline)

5. Wilco
Ode To Joy (dBpm)

6. Gene Clark
No Other (4AD)

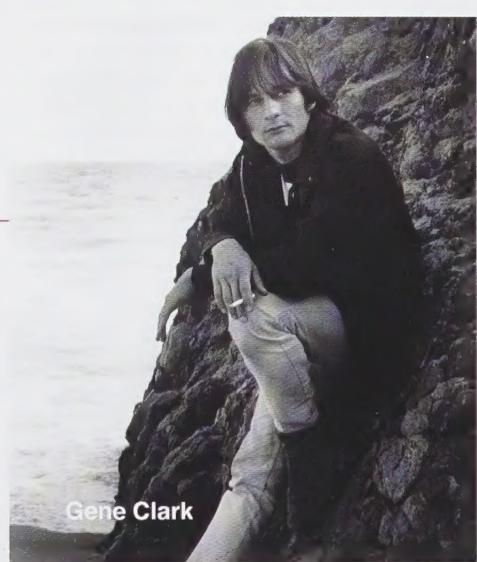
7. Big Thief
Two Hands (4AD)

8. Bonnie "Prince" Billy
I Made A Place (Drag City)

9. Neil Young
Colorado (Reprise)

10. Various Artists
Come On Up To The House: Women Sing Waits (Eone)

Based on album sales for Nov., Dec., Jan., 2019-2020, at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, ON, M6G 1B3



Gene Clark

penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

Issue No. 85, Spring, 2020

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2010, however, he finally made a brief emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

Penguin Eggs magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Canada Heritage and the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) distributed through the Canada Council for the Arts.

Canada

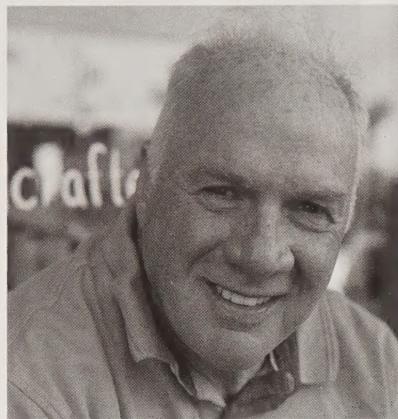


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Editorial



An interesting article appeared in a January issue of the U.K. daily newspaper *The Guardian*. The headline pretty much sums up the content: 'Celtic Connections to scale back on overseas acts to fight climate crisis'.

The Scottish festival's creative producer, Donald Shaw, described the issue as "the biggest challenge" facing the festival. "We cannot bury our head in the sand. It's not really enough to fly 300 artists from all around the world and justify it on the grounds that art is important. Festivals like this one are going to have to think very seriously about whether we can do that anymore."

Shaw said the move was necessary because it is "the right thing to do. It is the responsible thing to do. We all have to take responsibility for what is happening at the moment."

International musicians performing at Celtic Connections this past January flew from countries from Cameroon to Canada. It's this assortment of talent that makes his festival unique. While we can all sympathize with Shaw's concerns and admire his fortitude, such a plan undoubtedly will alter the widespread appeal of his event—as it would many of our summer festivals.

Yet climate change is real. The science is unequivocal. Disaster looms—a point tragically emphasized recently as the horror of the Australian bush fires unfolded. And

let's not forget that during two of the past three summers in Western Canada, similar fires raged out of control in parched forests, covering the region in dense smoke and, yes, affecting attendance as well as performances at various folk festivals.

We know who the main industrial culprits are. But even sectors of the fossil fuel industry now acknowledge the need for environmental guidelines, as witnessed by Teck Resources Ltd.'s decision to withdraw its \$20-billion Frontier project application in Alberta.

Our folk festivals have long been at the forefront when it comes to recycling, composting, and various other green programs. Solar power, for example, runs the occasional workshop stage PA. Free, cold water filling stations replace plastic bottles. Local public transit takes people to and from events.

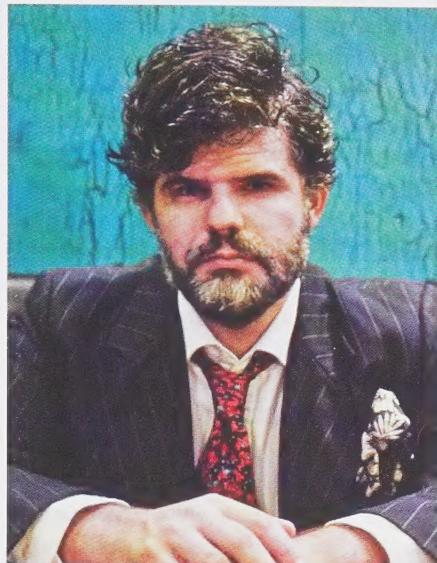
If only that were the case on a grander scale. But we live in the second-largest country in the world. Our landmass includes six time zones. From St. John's, NL, to Victoria, BC, is twice as far as it is from St. John's to Glasgow. Flight plays an integral role in all our lives, regardless of the entertainment value of having access to celebrated national and international musicians and singers. Yet our lives are enriched by their appearances.

Our festivals, like Celtic Connections, thrive on diversity. Clearly it's currently unrealistic to expect artists not to fly to folk events, especially as we are one of the few industrialized countries on the planet without an efficient national rail passenger service. On Dec. 19, though, aviation history was made in Canada: the first, brief flight in the world by an all-electric plane. It's a tiny step in the right direction.

And as a wise man once said, "a thousand-mile journey begins with a single step."

—Roddy Campbell

The Record That Changed My Life



Drew Gonzales: The maestro behind the thrilling, neo-calypso unit Kobo Town finds solace in Leonard Cohen's *You Want It Darker*.

A few years ago, I was flying back from a tour in Europe and perusing the music collection of the in-flight entertainment system when I finally settled on Leonard Cohen's final album, *You Want It Darker*. From the very first note I was caught, and listened to it again and again in its entirety the whole way home.

To my shame, I knew little of Cohen save his best-known songs and had no context for the lyrics on the album but the words themselves. But these words hit me like nothing else and seemed to voice so much of what has lurked in my own heart and unsettled my thoughts. To my untutored ears, all of the songs together formed a long, anguished address to a God he was letting go of—a meandering prayer that was honest enough to be unsure of its own destination.

All my life I have talked to God. As a young child, I assailed a dimly conceived deity for things that I did not get. Some were reasonable requests ("please help my parents to stay together"), others were less so ("give me wings so I can fly to my grandparents whenever I want"). Nothing was supposed to be impossible for the Omnipotent, and I think I took my family's breakup and my enduring flightlessness as a sign that such a being did not exist.

Later, as a teenage atheist, I spoke to a God I did not believe in—conscious that my

silent conversation partner was simply the sum of my hopes and fears projected onto an infinite yet imaginary canvas. I eventually found my Road to Damascus, however, and in the ensuing years have—in a fleeting, distracted way—addressed myself to one whose image has been coloured by a dozen shifting moods and theologies.

Yet I never did so with the heart-breaking honesty of Leonard Cohen.

As I listened on that bumpy flight, I thought of the Psalms, which, like Cohen, widen the discourse with the Divine beyond the narrow spectrum of praise and petition. They are full of rejoicing and gratitude, hope and despair, raging and cursing, and even some finger-pointing at Heaven for standing by as the wicked trample the good. Through this album, Cohen likewise laments the unremitting sorrow of our condition and even calls God to account for the "million candles burning for the help that never came".

Some have suggested that this whole record is a chronicle of his loss of faith. Indeed, the title track bewails the atrocities wrought in the name of religion, which have so darkened our human past, while in another he cautions the listener to steer a way "*past the altar and the mall / past the fables of creation and the fall*". In yet another, he apologizes to God for "*the ghost I made you be*", concluding that "*only one of us was real and that was me...*"

Yet these doubts—like the complaints of the psalmist—are sung against a backdrop of deepest longing, which he expresses with raw and unrivalled eloquence:

If the stars were all unpinned / And a cold and bitter wind / Swallowed up the world without a trace / Ah, well that's where I would be / What my life would seem to me / If I couldn't lift the veil and see your face"

This particular song reminds me of the more apocalyptic passages in the

Qur'an, replete with a darkened sun, fallen stars, and an ocean drained of its waters should he ever lose the love of his unnamed Other. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You" declared St. Augustine, and few have ever left such a record of this restlessness like Leonard Cohen.

By the time my flight was approaching Pearson, I realized that I was staring out the window the whole time, and somehow the shifting view—the ripples of the dark ocean far below, the sunrise breaking over the rolling clouds, and the grey ribbons of highway stretched across the GTA—seemed to intensify the many spiritual moods Cohen captured so beautifully and painfully in these songs. And I thought how, despite their intimacy, these were not private poems tucked away in a hidden journal but recorded and shared with the world, that the face he turned to God was the one he presented to us.

As I disembarked, I made a hundred resolutions to be a more honest man—to my family, to my audience, to myself—and hoped that at some point in my life I would be able to cry *hineni* (here I am Lord!) with a voice as true as that which struck me so forcefully on this album. I suppose only time will tell.

LEONARD COHEN

YOU WANT IT DARKER

Swansongs



1941-2020

Joseph Shabalala

Joseph Shabalala, founder of the Grammy Award-winning South African all-male, a cappella group Ladysmith Black Mambazo, died in Life Eugene Marais Hospital in Pretoria, Feb. 11, from long-term complications attributed to back surgery, aged 78.

While Ladysmith Black Mambazo were the first black group in South Africa to earn gold status for sales of their debut LP

Amabutho (1973) and would record numerous national gold and platinum discs, their harmony singing gained widespread international recognition for their collaboration with Paul Simon on his blockbuster album *Graceland*. They would feature prominently on two of the album's key tracks, *Homeless* and *Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes*, both co-written by Shabalala. *Graceland* sold 16 million copies worldwide and won

the 1987 Grammy for Album of the Year. Ladysmith Black Mambazo, too, would win Grammy Awards—five in all, the last in 2018 for *Shaka Zulu Revisited: 30th Anniversary Celebration* as Best World Music Album. They would also collaborate with the likes of Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, and Mavis Staples, and appear in the Michael Jackson film *Moonwalker*. They earned a Tony nomination for their score for the 1993 Broadway play *The Song of Jacob Zulu*, in which they performed as a chorus. And that same year, they accompanied Nelson Mandela to Oslo when he accepted his Nobel Peace Prize.

Bhekizizwe Joseph Siphatimandla Mxoveni Mshengu Bigboy Shabalala was born on Aug. 28, 1941, on a white-owned farm near the town of Ladysmith, out in the hills of KwaZulu-Natal, where his parents, Jonathan Miuwane Shabalala and Nomandla Elina Shabalala, worked. Joseph, the eldest of eight children, left school at 12, after his father died. As a teenager, he moved to Durban to work in a textile factory and sang in local vocal groups—the Durban Choir and The Highlanders. In 1959, he formed Ezimnyama, which he renamed Ladysmith Black Mambazo. They featured several of Shabalala's brothers and cousins singing.

The mbube and isicathamiya music that the all-male group sang originally emerged from the mining camps and industrial worksites created by migrant workers toiling far from home. Singing late into the night, they established harmony singing contests to relieve their after-work boredom. These contests played a significant role in the development of traditional choral music in South Africa. And Ladysmith Black Mambazo were competitive from the start. Possibly too good, as they were eventually banned from competitions for winning too frequently. In 1970, they began singing on radio programs broadcast on the Zulu service Radio Bantu. Such exposure caught the attention of South Africa's oldest independent record label, Gallo, which eventually released *Amabutho*. It was followed by a further two dozen successful albums before *Graceland*.

Paul Simon first heard traditional South African music on a cassette: *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits, Volume II*. By request, Black South African producer Roger Steffens sent Simon further tapes including

Nigeria's King Sunny Ade and, crucially, Ladysmith Black Mambazo's. Simon grew infatuated by Ladysmith's uplifting vocal harmonies. When he flew to South Africa to work with local musicians, Shabalala was invited to the Johannesburg studio. Their rapport was instant. When the two men embraced, Shabalala would later say it was the first time he had ever hugged a white man.

In the wake of the success of *Graceland*, Ladysmith released *Shaka Zulu* (1987), which Simon produced. It earned a Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Recording. Such exposure shot the group to international fame on the then nascent world music scene.

But tragedy wasn't far behind as apartheid still gripped South Africa. In 1991, Shabalala's brother, Headman, who sang bass in Ladysmith, was shot and killed by a white guard who was convicted of culpable homicide only to serve a three-year sentence under house arrest. Shabalala's wife of 30 years, Nellie, who led her own all-female group, Women of Mambazo, was also shot dead outside Durban in 2002. He faced further tragedy in 2004 when another brother, former Ladysmith Black Mambazo singer Ben Shabalala, was also fatally shot.

Joseph Shabalala retired in 2014. Lady smith Black Mambazo continue to tour.

— Roddy Campbell

David Olney

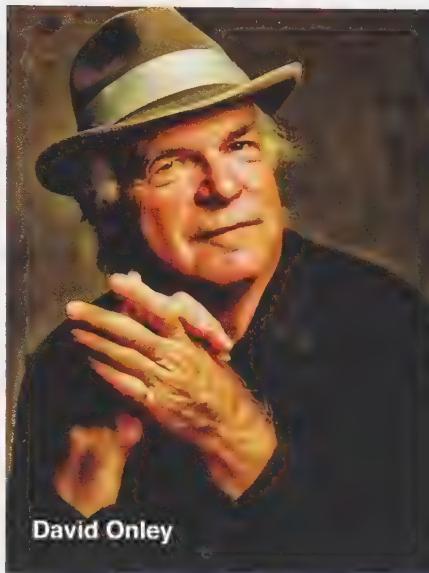
Born 1948

David Olney moved to Nashville in the early '70s, intent on making a career as a country singer and songwriter.

Like his pal Townes Van Zandt, Olney's quirky, poetic lyrics and hard-to-pigeonhole style made him a hard sell, although he did get songs recorded by Emmylou Harris, Steve Earle, and Linda Ronstadt.

Critics thought his 1995 album *High, Wide and Lonesome*—released just as the Americana boom was taking off—would make him a star. Its hard-hitting lyrics, dark melodies, and the presence of Garth Hudson, Rick Danko, Rodney Crowell, and other heavy hitters made it one of his best efforts. But despite relentless touring he never got the attention he deserved.

He gave witty interviews, willing to go on at length about music, the art of songwrit-



David Olney

ing, and the state of the world.

He released 32 albums, including outings with The X-Rays and The Nashville Jug Band. Olney died on Jan. 18, the way all performers dream of dying—onstage singing, his guitar in his hands. After he passed, he didn't drop his guitar or fall off the stool—a true professional to the end.

—j. poet

Arty McGlynn

Pioneering Irish Guitarist

Born 1944

Considered one of the finest acoustic guitarists ever performing traditional Irish music, Arty McGlynn died Dec. 18, after a long illness. He was 75. While he enjoyed a long and storied career as a soloist, and a fruitful partnership with his wife, fiddler Nollaig Casey, McGlynn performed or recorded with virtually a Who's Who of Irish music: Van Morrison, Enya, Planxty, Christy Moore, Dónal Lunny, Paul Brady, De Dannan, Patrick Street, Four Men and a Dog, Liam O'Flynn... His pioneering 1979 solo album *McGlynn's Fancy* is considered one of the most influential albums in traditional Irish circles.

Born Aug. 7, 1944, McGlynn was raised in remote Botera, a few miles west of Omagh, County Tyrone. He grew up surrounded by a family of traditional musicians. His mother, Mary, played the fiddle. Her father, Felix Kearney, was a well-known local poet and songwriter, and her two brothers, Feely and Arthur Kearney, were both fine fiddle players. McGlynn's

father, Jim, played the accordion. And Arty initially followed in his father's footsteps and could knock out a reel by age five.

His mother, however, bought him a guitar at the age of 11, and he practiced endlessly, guided by English guitarist Bert Weedon's *Play in a Day* tutorial books that influenced the likes of Eric Clapton, George Harrison, and Ray Davies.

Tuning into American forces radio broadcasts from Germany throughout the '50s, McGlynn was drawn to jazz and R&B, most notably guitarist Wes Montgomery and tenor saxophonist Jean-Baptiste (Illinois) Jacquet.

At age 15, he earned a living performing with various Irish showbands—The Melody Men, The Plattermen, Brian Call and The Buckaroos... They largely covered the current pop tunes of the day on the lucrative dancehall circuit around Ireland and the UK. He taught himself to play the pedal steel guitar.

But by the late '70s, he returned to his traditional roots and recorded *McGlynn's Fancy*—the first album to feature Irish traditional tunes played predominantly on an acoustic guitar.

It struck a note with the various members of Planxty and the Bothy Band, who had already taken Irish traditional music in exciting new directions. He would perform and record with numerous members of these two bands.



Arty McGlynn

Edmonton Folk Music Festival



August 6-9, 2020

www.edmontonfolkfest.org

His credits would include Paul Brady's seminal album *Hard Station*. Van Morrison, too, took notice and McGlynn appeared on Morrison's album's *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* (1986), *Avalon Sunset* (1989, and *Days Like This* (1995).

Still, in 1986, McGlynn joined the all-star lineup in Patrick Street, which included Andy Irvine, Kevin Burke, and Jackie Daly. McGlynn would record four studio albums with the band before leaving after *All in Good Time* (1993). As a producer he saw to Four Men & A Dog's debut *Barking Mad* (1991)—an album that *Folk Roots Magazine* voted Folk Album of The Year—the first time an Irish band won this honour.

McGlynn would go on to perform occasionally with his wife, Nollaig Casey, and record two albums, *Lead the Knave* (1989) and *Causeway* (1995). More recently, he enjoyed playing with The Heartstring Quartet, with his wife, her sister harpist Máire Ni Chathasaigh, and guitarist Chris Newman.

— Roddy Campbell

Bob Shane

Kingston Trio Lynchpin

Born 1934

Bob Shane gained international fame as the lead singer and guitarist of The Kingston Trio, the most commercially successful act of the 1950s American folk revival.

Shane was born on The Big Island of Ha-

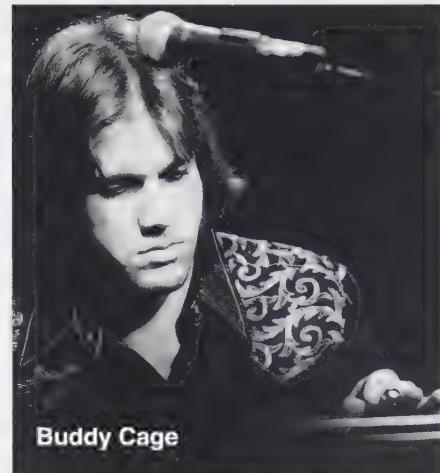
waii in 1934. He started playing Hawaiian music in high school with his friend Dave Guard, who became the Trio's banjo player and second guitarist.

They moved to California to attend college, soon meeting guitarist/percussionist Nick Reynolds. The unnamed trio started performing bawdy songs to make beer money and meet women, but after meeting publicist Frank Werber they turned pro' as The Kingston Trio and became the rage of the emerging folk scene, adding a show-business polish to traditional music. They signed with Capital Records in 1958.

Their first single, *Tom Dooley*, a Civil War-era song about murder and jealousy, won them a gold record. Although acoustically based, they played rock, pop, and world music, landing 14 albums in the Top 10, five of them No. 1 bestsellers. Guard left the Trio in 1961 and was replaced by John Stewart, who later wrote *Daydream Believer* for The Monkees and recorded the hit albums *California Bloodlines* (1969) and *Bombs Away Dream Babies* (1979).

The Kingston Trio broke up in 1967 as the initial, urban folk revival petered out, but Shane soon reformed the Trio with various sidemen. He retired from touring in 2004, but continued overseeing various incarnations of the band until the last months of his life. He died in hospice on Jan. 26, 2020, at the age of 85.

— j. poet



Buddy Cage

Storied Canadian Pedal Steel Player

Born 1946

Toronto-born pedal steel guitarist Buddy Cage, whose talents graced albums by such artists as Bob Dylan and Anne Murray, and who played an integral role in the evolution of the psychedelic, country-rock band New Riders of the Purple Sage (NRPS), died Feb. 5 in a Connecticut hospice, aged 73.

Born Feb. 18, 1946, Cage took up the pedal steel in his teens and clearly excelled. He would play on Murray's first four albums including her debut, *What About Me* (1968). And when Ian and Sylvia Tyson put together their pioneering electric country band, The Great Speckled Bird, in 1969 they recruited the services of Cage. Performing on the Festival Express Tour—a rock caravan that crossed Canada by train in 1970, with artists such as Janis Joplin, The Band, and the Grateful Dead, Cage caught the ear of the Dead's Jerry Garcia, who recommended him to the fledgling NRPS.

Cage would perform with NRPS from 1972 until 1982, and then intermittently until his death. Together they released 21 albums, the last being *Thanksgiving in New York City* (2019).

As a session musician, Cage performed with the likes of Sly Stone and appeared on such diverse albums as Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks* (1975), Slipknot's *Slip Into Somewhere* (1997), and George Hamilton IV's *My North Country Home* (2011).

Cage was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2012 and suffered two strokes, in June 2017 and February 2018.

— Roddy Campbell

Introducing Skye Concert



With an instrumental lineup that features nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle), cello, and cittern/bouzouki; a lead singer from Sweden with a golden voice; and a repertoire rooted in traditions that span the Atlantic, Skye Consort and Emma Björling is a one-of-a-kind quartet.

"Skye Consort has been doing baroque and folk music fusion since 1999, based in Montreal," says co-founder Séan Dagher. "We've released a series of albums with different singers—classical and folk—and played Welsh, Scottish, Irish, French music—always taking folk songs and giving them interesting new arrangements."

"This collaboration with Emma Björling started about two years ago. Alex Kehler, our fiddle and nyckelharpa player, knew her from the folk music world and brought her onboard for a project we were doing with La Nef, a much larger ensemble. Emma's flight home was cancelled because of an ice storm in Iceland, so she spent three days with me and Amanda [Keesmaat], our cellist, sleeping on the couch. During those three days we got the idea for a Skye Consort project with her. We'd really enjoyed working together on the La Nef thing, and she wanted to do something in particular with cello and the soundscape it brought."

Last year's eponymous *Skye Consort & Emma Björling* is the fruit, a wonderfully varied collection of tracks, six of them Scandinavian songs and tunes. The lilting opener, *Herr Hillebrand*, sets the tone with its spirited yet intricate accompaniment of Björling's emotionally nuanced voice.

Most of the music on the album is traditional, though Dagher wrote the two Celtic tunes, *The Skunk/Thick As Thieves*, and *Cast Iron Stove* is a contemporary song from the pen of late Australian songwriter Harry Robertson. Other songs in English are the comic *The Old Man From Over The Sea*; the usually melancholic *The Banks Of The Sweet Primroses*, here played uptempo with syncopation, a touch of swagger, and a shaker; and the anthemic Scottish parting song *May The Road*. *La Femme Du Soldat* is a lively French chanson à répondre, with finely articulated lead vocals by Dagher, backed up by Björling, who adds a Swedish flavour.

"Usually we get things from field recordings, and avoid things done by other contemporary artists. We're going through songs that we've often known a long time but have never recorded, and finding this is the right home for them." The diversity of sources reflects the musical backgrounds and associates of the artists rather than their family origins. "Emma has a couple of other projects she works with, a Swedish women's a cappella group called Kongero and the band Lyy. Alex plays a lot of Scandinavian music but also American and French-Canadian. Amanda plays all these different folk styles and is the principal cellist with the Arion baroque orchestra. And I play a lot of Celtic music, also French and Acadian."

In March, the eclectic Skye Consort are heading off for shows in Denmark with Björling, and a tour of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is lined up for the fall, plus a return to Europe late this year, and more touring beyond.

"Ours isn't a one-off collaboration. Emma is the singer we're going to be working with for the foreseeable future, and we're talking about a subsequent project with her. The machine is up and running." And it hums.

– By Tony Montague





Introducing Màiri Rankin & Eric Wright

Most readers will be familiar with Màiri Rankin's splendid fiddling with The Outside Track and Beolach and with Eric Wright's innovative cello-ing with The Fretless, but perhaps not with how they came together as a musical duo.

Speaking on the phone from a snow-bound Cape Breton, Ms. Rankin is keen to enlighten us.

"We met at a music camp called Kenosee Lake Kitchen Party. We got along like a house on fire. We played together at one of the instructors' concerts. We just kinda let loose—it was the firestarter for the whole thing."

Talk of recording together soon followed but busy schedules meant it evolved slowly. Finally they pitched up at a cottage in Eric's native Vermont to figure out which tunes would work best.

"It was a question of finding ones that made each other's playing shine. We went through a lot of tunes—stuff I'd tried previously that maybe hadn't worked. When I brought them to Eric they seemed tailored to the sound we wanted. It came together so quickly—there was magic to it."

"Maybe *The Cabin Sessions* is the one album I'll ever make that will happen like that! Pairing it down for two instruments was a breath of fresh air. There's old-time tunes, Cape Breton slow airs, Shooglenifty tunes from Scotland, Irish ones, pipe tunes. It's a potpourri—a big collection of tunes that really spoke to us."

There is, of course, another fiddle and cello duo who have made a big success of that lineup.

"We were very aware of Alistair Fraser and Natalie Haas's playing—it's absolutely stunning—but we were consciously not trying to copy them. When Eric was at Berklee College of Music, Natalie was his teacher. Eric has a very different style—a lot more percussive and choppy."

"We knew people would think of the Alistair and Natalie sound, but no two players are alike and so, hopefully, when they hear us they'll remember the Eric Wright and Màiri Rankin sound."

However popular fiddle and cello duos may become, it's still true to say that most accompaniment in contemporary fiddle music is provided by piano and/or guitar.

At first blush, it might seem a bit limiting to replace them with the 'humble' four-stringed cello.

"Eric knows inside and out about chord progressions. I never felt I was limited in any way in what I could play with him. Slow airs—it was eye opening how beautiful they could become. There's the chop that is so rhythmic."

"There's the really rich bass lines, too. He would dissect the tunes and make each part shine. It's amazing he's able to get all of that out of the cello."

All of which makes for a very bright future.

"Every night we get off stage we are super happy with the sound we're making."

As their recent nomination for a Canadian Folk Music Award will attest, they aren't the only ones!

—By Tim Readman



Introducing Dayna Manning



Some 25 years into her career, Dayna Manning is home again, geographically and spiritually, full circle back to her Ontario roots and the basic motivations that got her into music.

The gifted singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, producer, and mentor explains that her first solo album in more than a decade, *Morning Light*, was the catalyst that brought things together.

Her song *The Same Way*, about salmon returning to spawn, also echoes personal sentiments.

"It sounds crazy but that song is absolutely about me, finding my way back home after exploring the music business, and trying to pass on what I've learned. When you grow up in a town like Stratford, Ontario, and you're constantly surrounded by world-class actors and musicians that definitely inspires you. It's that inspiration behind *Morning Light*."

A chamber folk combo of cello, flute, violin, French horn, and additional guests back Manning's crystalline vocals and acoustic guitar and banjo for the novel sonic departure. She coaxed the Stratford Festival's Ben Bolt-Martin to finesse arrangements and play cello for eight original songs, three comely传统s, and a cover of Joni Mitchell.

The cast includes her parents, too, David and Darlene Manning on trumpet and clarinet respectively, and the presence of family and friends seeps out in the warm acoustic feel of the songs.

"It hit me that the musical director of the Stratford Festival lived two doors down. Making a folk record in Stratford in the year 2019 is really about connecting with the people around you."

Her songs cover a lot of territory, from tributes to her pets and long-distance love affairs to *King Of The Background*, about the legacy of the late Richard Manuel, a native of Stratford best known for his keyboards and co-writing in The Band. The beautiful opening song *Charlie Lake* is about seeing the northern lights at night, a remnant of five years she spent living in northern British Columbia most of a decade ago.

Manning's proclivity for music was evident early on but it took a while to find the right direction on her creative compass. Raised by musician parents, she was exposed mostly to classical and pop music as a kid, taking piano and guitar lessons. After being chosen to tour as an opening act for Burton Cummings, she auditioned for label executives and signed a deal with EMI at age 16. They released her debut, *Volume 1*, which included special guests such as Sean Lennon and Melanie Doane, garnering a nomination for Best New Artist at the 1998 Juno Awards. She found herself touring the continent, opening for acts such as Joe Cocker and Radiohead, and played the first two years of Lillith Fair.



Clearly, Manning was on a trajectory to wider attention but she didn't identify with pop music. Her second album, *Shades* (2002), leaned closer to Americana and Manning says the label "hated it". By *Folkyo* (2006), she was independent again.

"I think I was always a folkie but I didn't really know what that meant. The path I was going down had more to do with writing songs about my community and local stories and legends. As I get older, I'm more inspired by Ian Tamblyn than I am by what's on popular radio."

In 2011, she started an extended stint with Trent Severn, the trio she co-founded with Emm Gryner. Releasing three digital-only albums, managing and touring with the group kept Manning busy into 2018.

The singer's latest project is The Folk Army, a Stratford-based initiative to mentor young women songwriters. It's all addressed in the book she wrote parallel to *Morning Light*, titled *Many Moons: A Songwriter's Memoir*, tying her story to songs she wrote over the years.

Given Manning's wealth of experience in music, it's hard to imagine a better guide for beginning artists.

– By Roger Levesque

Music PEI executive director Rob Oakie has overseen one of the most successful programs in the country. Artists such as Irish Mythen, Catherine Maclellan, The East Pointers, Vishtan...have all enjoyed remarkable national and international recognition through the progressive promotional efforts and support from Oakie and the island's musical organization.

Questions by **Roddy Campbell**.

When was Music PEI started and why?

It started originally in 2001 with the Music PEI Awards Association. In 2005, I had joined the board. There were a couple of guys there who were artist managers—Grady Poe and Roy Doyle. They informed me that we were the only province without a music industry association. So we started to lobby the government and it took two years. After two years getting nowhere with the bureaucrats, I called up the premier [Pat Binns] and got a meeting with him, and within 20 minutes had a commitment for \$150,000.

What sort of programmes do you offer?

We give out close to \$100,000 a year. We have three levels of funding, targeting artists at a certain point in their career. There's an emerging artist grant, an export and marketing grant, and the big one, which is called the career investment. It goes \$1,000, \$2,200, and \$10,000. They are all funding the same thing it's just to a different amount. You can use any of these grants for marketing, touring, showcasing, and professional development—those are the four main things that we cover.

How do you qualify for support from your organisation?

You have to be a resident, that's No. 1. It's taxpayers' money so we want to make sure that it's taxpayers here that are using it. So you have to be a full-time resident of P.E.I. Each category has different eligibility criteria, like the export development. It's trying to follow your career as you grow. The emerging one has a very low threshold for eligibility, whereas when you get to export development you have to have released an album in the past two or three years, and you have to have some experience touring outside the province. Those things prove



Rob Oakle

that you're moving with your career instead of staying stagnant.

How many artists do you support?

Each year, we fund 34 different projects for various amounts. So that's just the funding program. The other thing we've been doing since 2008 is Showcase PEI, which has been super successful for us. We've started some new programs recently that I'm super excited about that are having a pretty significant impact. One of them is called the Golden Ticket. This is quite a unique program; I haven't seen another one like it yet. We take an artist that has an unreleased song and we hire a studio, we hire a producer, we record it, and then we hire a publicist and release it to radio. So we go through all the stages of creating and releasing a single.

You also have an international exchange program.

Yes, we've worked with England, Wales, and Denmark. This past year, we put together Vishtan with Catherine Finch and Sakou Keita. So we put these two artists together, they showcased at Showcase PEI. They co-wrote some tunes. They did a concert here

and now in May Vishtan are going over to Wales and are going to play at Focus Wales, the conference, and then are going to tour the U.K.

Why do you think you've become so successful promoting your artists?

Because we have great artists [laughs]. My whole thing is just to put people in the best position to succeed. It's up to them to be great; if they just get a little help at the right time, it can make a big difference.

Music PEI hosts the CFMAs in April.

Music PEI has a partnership with the CFMA. We are doing all the local organizing. We will also be presenting local P.E.I. artists for a showcase for the delegates. That's something new this year—the Delegates Program. We're bringing in 10 national and 10 international buyers from venues such as Branouter Festival in Belgium and the legendary Caffé Lena in Saratoga Springs [NY]. It will bring more opportunities for the artists. And it's a lot more reason to travel halfway across the country. It's not just about winning an award. I think this is going to be the best-attended awards yet but we'll see.



Sultans of String

With an all-star cast that includes Bela Fleck, their new disc highlights the moving plight of immigrants.

By Dan Rosenberg

"I walked, and ran, and screamed / miles on end, to find peace / before I could pronounce my own name. / I come with too many invisible treasures / often misunderstood / feared by all / banned by politics / never belonging / and always longing. / I am a refugee and I anchor humanity."

These words are part of Ifrah Mansour's poem, *I Am A Refugee*, which became the vision of the Sultans of String's latest project, *Refuge*, an urgent musical

examination of the pain of being forced out of one's homeland and the experience of immigration.

Mansour is a Somali-American poet and performance artist who was just five years old back in 1991 when civil war broke out in Mogadishu. She grew up in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp, where she lived until 1998 when her family was able to immigrate to the United States.

"Writing the poem was a way to unleash some pain that I could name finally," Mansour explains. "I wrote it because I was so frustrated with so many people sending me emails and asking me what I thought about the travel ban... An artist's job is to draw that hope, especially in a time of deep hopelessness."

The entire poem is absolutely searing, drawing you in to both Mansour's pain and her dreams. It continues:

"I am a refugee, globally villainized /

yet I bring you a slice of the world, of my own home, right here in your backyard. / I bring you food so intricately spiced it revolutionized your palette. / I bring you my vibrant fabrics, / hand-woven with ancient delicate wisdom, / that has diversified your closed-minded colour wheels. / I bring you my children, my precious only children, / to share a history, a future with you. / You and I are too stuck together to be this far apart. / I am a refugee and I glue humanity."

This is just one of the 13 tracks on *Refuge*, and completely captures the spirit of the project. The Ontario-based world music fusion band partnered with 30 immigrants and refugees to share stories of the lands they left behind, and their experiences as immigrants.

It seemed slightly incongruous to hang out in a trendy Toronto coffee shop on Bloor Street and discuss the horrors that many of the musicians on *Refuge* endured.

That's where I met Chris McKhool, the band's founder and violinist who was also sorting out hundreds of details for the epic launch of the album on May 22, just a few blocks down the street at Toronto's Trinity-St. Paul Centre, where the Sultans and more than a dozen musical friends from every corner of the globe will share the stage.

Refuge couldn't be timelier in an environment when travel bans, border walls, and increasing xenophobia are all in the headlines. While most people in North America don't focus on what drove their families to leave their homelands and settle here, McKhool knows the importance of these stories.

This project is quite personal for McKhool, who grew up in the comforts of Ottawa.

"My grandfather on my father's side, Eli Joseph Makhoul, came to Canada as a refugee in 1903 as a stowaway on a ship," he recounts.

"He grew up in a Greek Orthodox family in a village called Kfarmishki in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and fled because of religious intolerance. He came to Canada with no money and worked as a streetcar conductor for the Ottawa Electric Railway."

How did Makhoul become McKhool? The Sultans' violinist explains that a border guard likely changed the spelling when his grandfather arrived in Canada 117 years ago.

The story of McKool's grandfather's journey to Canada was the basis for another song on *Refuge*.

"*Hurricane* is a romantic vision of what it would have been like for my grandfather to come over, mixed with the historical record of the first Lebanese person to come to Canada in the 1800s," McKool remarks about the song.

"That first Lebanese immigrant was doing door-to-door sales and wrote to his wife, 'I'll save money to send for you,' but before he could save up enough, she passed away."

What does *Refuge* sound like? It certainly would be filed under "world music" if any actual record stores still existed. *fRoots* editor Ian Anderson likes to describe "world music" as, "Local music that isn't from 'here,' wherever 'here' is."

That's why flamenco is seen as world music here in Canada, but not in Spain.

Meanwhile in Spain, locals might consider bluegrass as a type of world music.

On *Refuge*, the Sultans' core—violin, bass, drums, electric and acoustic guitars—is mixed on various songs with sitar, harp, djembe, kora, santur, and numerous other instruments from around the globe to create pop music that could accurately be described as "world music" as opposed to singular local folk rhythms.

In the past, such an idea seemed more of a fictional, idealistic, Star Trek-inspired future but in Toronto, where a majority of the population was born outside of Canada, this global fusion is becoming more and more common, with Kuné, Canada's Global Orchestra, being another great example of the trend (and in fact, sitar virtuoso Answar Kurshid is a member of both projects).

The stories of how each of the 30 artists on *Refuge* came to North America are incredibly moving. Recounting all of them would sadly put me well over my word count, so I'll finish with two more songs.

The Grand Bazaar is an instrumental, jazz-influenced composition with a pair of standout guests: Bela Fleck (banjo) and Robi Botos (piano).

Fleck, a 14-time Grammy winner, explains: "My family's story involves immigration. Of course, we came in to Ellis Island, my grandparents on my mother's side, Jewish-Russian refugees... I was really fortunate that they were able to get out of a dangerous part of the world, and that America took them in at that time."

Meanwhile, Fleck's partner on *The Grand Bazaar*, Robi Botos, fled persecution and arrived in Canada two decades ago. In 2012, Botos told *Maclean's* about why he decided to leave Europe: "The reality in Hungary is that, for Roma and for Jews, Hungary is not safe anymore... There's half-military parties, there's uniforms, there's Nazi-like people running around, getting in government, getting in parliament." As a result, taking part in *Refuge* seemed completely natural for the Juno Award-winning pianist.

"I wanted to be involved [in this project] because I came to Canada as a refugee. At first, my case was rejected and I was nearly kicked out. With the help of musicians, fans, and people from the music industry who supported me, I managed to stay in Canada."

The other song that helped launch the *Refuge* project is *Imad's Dream*. It is a piece that speaks to how desperate things must be for a musician to give up everything, leave their family and friends, and move to a country where they don't even speak the language.

"Who does that?" asks McKhool. "You're not coming here unless your life is really rough. This past winter, you see all the people who have walked across fields from the U.S. into Canada, sometimes freezing off their hands, sometimes losing their feet to frostbite, but still feeling grateful to be here. How bad must it be back home?"

Last year, when the Sultans of String were touring upstate New York, they were approached by a local refugee settlement agency and asked if they'd be interested in performing with Imad Al Taha, a well-known Iraqi violinist who had given concerts throughout Iraq and the Arabian Gulf region.

While living in Iraq, Al Taha was forced to perform for Saddam Hussein, under threat of execution. When Hussein's government was overthrown, Al Taha found himself threatened by religious extremists who considered his music offensive and subsequently bombed his home. Al Taha came to America as a refugee during the Obama administration.

"It's a particular time in history right now. There are more displaced people than at any other period in recorded history," McKhool points out.

"We are living in one of the last liberal democracies on the planet. It's important to realize that these stories can be told here [in Canada] but these musicians might not have the freedom to tell these stories in their home countries. We are fortunate to live in a society that honours freedom of speech and our diverse heritage."

So, what was Imad Al Taha's personal dream that inspired the song? It is simply for Iraq to once again become safe so that he can return home and reunite with his family.

Dan Rosenberg is a Toronto-based journalist whose reports are regularly featured on Afropop Worldwide, Café International, Toronto's ClassicalFM, and other radio programs, and is the producer of numerous recordings, including *Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II*.



William Prince

Juno Award-winning songwriter's hard truths make his latest recording timeless.
By David McPherson

Reliever: a noun meaning something or someone that relieves pain, distress, or difficulty.

Long before he won a Juno for Contemporary Roots Album of the Year, and left side hustles behind to work full time as a musician, William Prince dreamed of a different calling.

The Peguis First Nation from Manitoba set his head, and his heart, on becoming a physician; he wanted to travel to remote communities and relieve people's pain. What he didn't realize is this: despite his path diverging during his university years from doctor to songwriter, his art allowed

him to become a different kind of healer.

Through his words, metaphors, and melodies, this musical messenger relieves the burdens of others—sharing his struggles and his gratitude. People find solace in his music. In these days of constant noise, the healing powers of his songs are needed more than ever. Spend time talking with Prince and listening to his music and you come away affected.

"William is what the music world needs right now," comments fellow songwriter and mentor Scott Nolan, who co-produced Prince's latest batch of songs, *Reliever*, at his Winnipeg studio (The Song Shop).

"People look for healing and calm in music. William's music isn't frivolous or bubble gum for the radio. It's life affirming. There are healing properties to what he is doing. Authenticity in art is mandatory and William has that in spades."

When *Penguin Eggs* connects with Prince, the songwriter is at home in Winnipeg, staring at a cold lunch. When promoting a new record, sometimes just getting a bite

in between back-to-back interviews is hard. The artist is not complaining. Prince is full of gratitude.

Despite a recent appearance on *CBS Saturday Morning*, rave reviews from publications such as *Rolling Stone*, and sharing the stage in the past with Canadian legends such as Neil Young and Buffy Sainte-Marie, Prince remains grounded. He is happy to talk about his sophomore record with anyone who appreciates his art and is interested in listening. Something about Prince's honesty and his warm, soulful delivery makes the songwriter a connector.

Reliever, released by Glassnote Records in the U.S. and Six Shooter Records in Canada in February 2020, follows his 2015 debut, *Earthly Days*. The 11 spirited songs on *Reliever* offer hope and healing. All are sung with a voice that bleeds passion.

Prince's pipes are the star instrument, guiding the listener to the heart—and the heartbeat—within each composition. Prince goes through painful reflection. From the heartbreak of realizing the mother of his

child is not his soul mate anymore (*Wasted* and *Always Have What We Had*) to coming to terms with the death of his father (*Great Wide Open*) to offering advice to his son (*That's All I'll Ever Become*), there is something in these universal human experiences with which everyone can identify.

Take this turn of phrase and wonderful wish from *That's All I'll Ever Become*: “*I want to live to the second last day that my children do / selfishly so I can see them through all that they've become*”.

In *The Gun*, Prince lets go of regrets and realizes he needs to get out of his head before he can truly live and move on, describing this feeling like “living with a loaded gun”. His fatherly advice in this song is simple, yet sincere: “*It doesn't matter who you love son / If you don't love yourself son.*”

As the songs emerged, Prince’s muse instructed him to throw discontents and resentments out the door. In return, this release offered him a new purpose.

“I was born to sing but I want to exit as a philanthropist, someone who helps and

heals,” he says.

As the catharsis of *Reliever* concludes, gratitude emerges. Each song, like a prescribed pill, offers a dose of medicine that focuses on a different ailment. What he, and the listener, is left with is newfound hope. The simple act of taking these thoughts and letting them pour onto the page was the creative spark his muse needed.

“That was the relief,” Prince explains. “For me to stay alive, I needed to chase these songs. The theme of relief came simply from the fact that that is what I needed most. There are records about drinking, or records of lonesomeness or love, but what I needed most was a break from the ongoing dialogue in my mind: dealing with losing my dad, becoming a dad, the separation from his mother, and the whirlwind from all these hard things I was dealing with in real time.”

Prince sought to balance in his brain these hard truths all while *Earthly Days* launched the songwriter into stardom. He lived with the grief of these unresolved feelings for years while his career took off. This record

was the overdue amends and release he needed to make before he could find internal peace.

“I was in the midst of a dream, yet there was still a cloud hanging over me that I could not shake,” he recalls. “I wrote these new songs as a way to reflect. The songs are not filled with anger, spite, or resentment, but a place of love. *Reliever* is a piece of art that shows resilience. It tells people how to survive when your engines fail or there is a hole in your boat.”

This honest writing makes *Reliever* a timeless record. It’s only Chapter 2 in a life-long story. Forty years from now, just like seminal songs from his writing heroes such as Leonard Cohen, Bruce Cockburn, and Neil Young, Prince believes these pieces will survive and still resonate.

Now that he has found his calling, he plans to make records and continue to heal himself—and others—from Manitoba to Berlin, and wherever else his music finds a home, for as long as his muse delivers these songs as gifts for this reliever to offer the world.

THE MAHONES



UNPLUGGED



This St Patrick's Day is exactly 30 years to the day since the launch of the Mahones – still the hardest working band in the Celtic Punk scene. With guests Sarah Harmer, Damhnait Doyle and Simon Townsend of The Who, “Unplugged” is a collection of their best-loved tracks, in a raw and intimate performance. **AVAILABLE MARCH 15**

Linn's Canada



Che Apalache

Their impressive, inspirational bluegrass roots stretch from Argentina to Appalachia.
By Alan Kellogg

Che Apalache—a band that puts the world back into world music. Definitively.

You try to imagine the pitch session of a screenwriter or agent or manager or aspiring novelist. Here's your high concept:

A kid from the Piedmont tobacco country of Winston-Salem, NC, was taken by a concert by fellow Tar Heel/certified master Doc Watson. The young lad, one Joe Troop, became entranced as any sentient being with operational ears should in that iconic company. He set out to become a musician himself. And boy, was he ever in the right place on the planet.

Finding competent, inspirational teachers/fellow enthusiasts of string band music—folk, bluegrass, old-timey, mountain, etc.—in that neck of Appalachia is about as hard as scouting out a local meal of grits, black-eyed peas, greens, and corn bread. Not, you appreciate, that the eating morphs you into a world-class chef—or, in this case, that the

elevated learning process was inevitably destined to produce an accomplished singer, multi-instrumentalist, and songwriter.

It just happened to work out that way.

Having said it—trust me on this, as I have my own cautionary ancient history with the state—there is certainly also a social downside to certain parts of the purple state. That was especially so for a young gay man such as our hero, Joe, who espoused progressive politics and a yearning to savour the world and its myriad treasures, musical and otherwise. As his official bio puts it, “at a certain point he no longer felt welcome in his own home region.”

That led to expat status that continues to this day. Along the way, there were extended residencies in Spain, North Africa, Japan, and, finally, to Argentina, where he lives today in the capital, Buenos Aires. Blessed also with what must be an impressive facility for language, he learned Japanese and Spanish, along with myriad musical influences that can be heard in his music with Che Apalache today. That includes, but certainly isn't restricted, to flamenco, swing, (Django-esque) jazz manouche, South American folk strains including Uruguayan murga, swing, cumbia, tango, Sephardic, and (well) beyond. And yes, Japanese traditional as well.

On the other hand, the band can burn

through a standard bluegrass instrumental with the best of them, along with easily summoning the ghost of Stanley Brothers vocal harmonies. Troop's clear, clean, resonant lead vocals in English remind me of a young Rodney Dillard. I lack the sophistication to suggest comparisons in Spanish or Japanese but it comes off real enough.

All this could be very confusing to some. And totally beguiling. But unlike so many hyphenated fill-in-the-blank-grass hybrid bands, the songs, performances, and arrangements feel whole and unique, as opposed to grafting something “foreign” onto a basic bluegrass band format.

Hanging with the Argentine community in Seville for a time, Troop finally set off for Buenos Aires in 2010, coincidentally the year the Peronista government of the day proclaimed marriage equality. A good omen. Via the Internet and posterizing music stores, he set up shop teaching bluegrass and suddenly found some serious interest.

On the line from the Argentine capital on a beautiful February summer's day way down south, Troop, well spoken as you might expect, affable as you would hope, explains the Che Apalache creation story.

“There is a hobbyist tradition in Argentina where people will devote a year to investigate something different. They'll say to themselves, ‘what can I do to satisfy this

curiosity' and go for it. It's often an exploration as opposed to pursuing something on a permanent basis. I ended up with a lot of great students."

In time, three of them were so impressive that Troop reckoned that he was ready to throw in his lot with them, who bring their own disparate traditions and influences to the mix. Argentines Franco Martino (guitar) and Martin Bobrik (mandolin) join Mexican capitalino Pau Barjau on banjo.

The band has certainly enjoyed success in its home stomping grounds, if also considered on the avant-garde side of the equation.

"Bluegrass will never become mainstream in Argentina," Troop laughs, "which is fine." The band attracted U.S. grant money to float an American tour in 2017 and quickly recorded its debut album, *Latingrass*, in Buenos Aires—an impressive primer by any metric, stretching from affecting political songs such as progressive gospel of *The Wall* or heart-wrenching sentiments of *Pri-sionero* to the *Ballad of Jed Clampett*. They sang *The Wall* ("Let us sing about a better world / Where different paths will soon

unfurl") at a Virginia fiddler's convention the same day as the infamous Charlottesville Nazi march. An irate listener stormed the stage.

The music, and at least to some degree the group's inclusive mission, was noticed in the States. By 2019, banjo virtuoso/brilliant cross-pollinator/Troop musical hero Béla Fleck answered a letter and music file Joe sent him. Impressed, Fleck waived the fee and invited the band to his famously rigorous summer banjo camp. Things went well and soon enough the maestro was producing the Nashville sessions that became *Rearrange My Heart*, a standout album that richly deserves a Grammy, among other kudos.

Among the varied (!) selections you'll find is the superb, powerful *The Dreamer*, which chronicles the story of Troop's friend Moises Serrano, a queer North Carolina immigrant and DACA recipient (please look it up, Canadian/British readers) from Mexico.

"He's as much a North Carolinian as I am. I am a migrant myself now. He can't go to college because of these clowns. We have to

change that. This is dangerous territory, but we have to discover what 'common ground' really means. Common ground is what Che Apalache is all about."

2020 will find the band on extensive tours in the U.S. and South America, with no scheduled dates in Canada—a fact that should inspire a degree of soul searching by its booking agency.

"We do sometimes struggle with presenting our point of view to southern (American) audiences and promoters. But we are the farthest thing from being politically heavy-handed. The idea, again, is to seek common ground. I hope that for some people, [our work is] medicine, something to feel good about given the complexities we all deal with. If someone hears us and begins pondering the plight of undocumented immigrants and re-thinks things, well, great. This isn't a pipe dream."

"And, of course, we hope they simply enjoy the music and the cultural fusion."

Little worry there, given a chance. Here is music that deserves our attention.

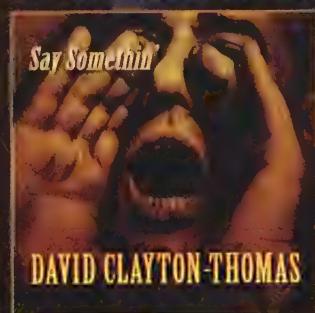
Give it a spin.

DAVID CLAYTON THOMAS

Say Somethin'

Linus Canada

Former Blood Sweat & Tears frontman, Grammy-Winning, 40-million album-selling, Hall of Fame icon David Clayton-Thomas announces the release of his politically-potent album,
SAY SOMETHIN'



Available March 20



Linda and Joe Byrne

**The fifth feature in
a series celebrating
contributors to Cana-
da's grand folk legacy.**
By Jean Hewson

Traditional music came to Linda and Joe Byrne through family and community connections.

"When we resettled to Arnold's Cove, I went to parties that were on the go and I became interested in the songs I heard there," recalls singer Linda Byrne when asked about her early memories of traditional music.

"I learned songs mostly from Mac Masters and Mary Caul—they were both great singers. Mac was from Harbour Buffet and Mary was an old lady from Davis Cove. Then I started asking my mother about old songs, and she had loads of them, so I made recordings of her."

Originally born in Kingwell on Long

Island, Placentia Bay, Linda grew up in Arnold's Cove during the folk music revival of the 1970s. People like Mac Masters had been brought to the public eye by the *Ryan's Fancy* TV show on CBC, and bands such as Figgy Duff were bringing the traditional music of the province to folk festivals far and wide.

She eventually moved to St. John's and became part of the local folk music scene, performing at concerts and various events, including the inaugural Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival in 1977. She hasn't missed a festival since.

In the early '70s, Linda travelled to Nova Scotia to attend the defunct Atlantic Folk Festival, an event established by legendary music presenter Brooks Diamond. While she was there, she met a man named Joe Byrne, who was performing with a group called the Breakwater Boys. Joe was from Grand Paradise on the western side of Placentia Bay. They hit it off, and have been together ever since.

Joe's initial exposure to traditional music

took a different route. "My father was a fisherman in his earlier days—I think he saw the writing on the wall and he decided to leave Placentia Bay before resettlement began. He left the fishery and became the assistant light-house keeper at Fort Amherst in St. John's.

"Unfortunately, dad passed away when he was only 58 years old, and I ended up going to live with my married sister in North Carolina. I spent nine years down there and became very interested in the music from that area, which was mostly country and bluegrass," muses Joe.

"Mom was always a kitchen singer. She was the kind of person who would sing while she was doing the dishes or sewing or knitting. Getting involved in listening to country music actually made me pay more attention to mom's songs. There was a spark created there in terms of interest."

The Resettlement program instigated by the government of Newfoundland and Labrador during the 1950s and '60s reshaped the province and created a climate of

turmoil and upheaval amongst the displaced that persists to this day. It is a theme that is often revisited in stories and songs, and it played a big role in the creation of the seminal Newfoundland album *Towards the Sunset*, a collection of original songs released on vinyl in 1983 by Joe and his brother, Pat, along with their friend, well-known accordion player Baxter Wareham.

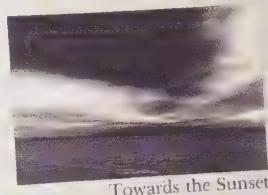
"The birth of our songwriting was our collaboration with Al Pittman," remembers Joe. "Al was from Placentia Bay as well, and he became a poet of great prominence, both locally and nationally. He was a great friend of Pat's, and he would call him up and say, in his very deep voice, 'Paddy, I've got this scribble I want you to look at.' Those 'scribbles' turned into songs the likes of *The Rocks of Merasheen* and *The Silver Dove*.

"After writing songs with Al, Pat got his creative juices flowing and wrote several songs on the album, including *Pad's Song*, *West Moon*, and *Towards the Sunset*. I was the one who refined the melodies—I had a better command of the guitar at that time. When we finally recorded the album, Baxter Wareham, who was a fantastic accordion and mandolin player, came in and added instrumentation."

They pressed 1,000 vinyl LPs, and Pat joked that after sales they would probably be left with 950. Much to their surprise, the album, with its poignant songs about resettlement and the decline of the fishing industry, was a bestseller and became an instant classic. Numerous musicians have acknowledged its influence upon their own songwriting, and CD reissues of the album continue to sell and resonate with folk music audiences.

"We had a great experience happen to us at the Mortier Motel down in Marystow when we were performing down there," says Joe. "This fellow came up to us at the bar and said to Pat, 'You're Pat Byrne, aren't you? I've been listening to your album, and that song, *The Rocks of Merasheen*. Well, I can still remember my grandfather singing that.' We were almost offended

Pat and Joe Byrne
with Baxter Wareham



initially, but when we thought about it, we realized that it was a very, very high compliment. He saw the song as being part of the tradition that we were trying to continue through our songwriting."

If traditional music came to the Byrnes through family and community connections, that legacy carries on through their sons, Allan and Matthew. Both are excellent singers and musicians, and Matthew is one of the bright, shining stars of NL folk, touring the world as a solo artist and as a member of the trad group The Dardanelles.

Much of Matthew's repertoire comes from his mother Linda, and the recordings that she made of her own mother many years ago. Linda continues to perform and actively promotes traditional unaccompanied singing as one of the founders of the Crow's Nest Ballad Night, which takes place on the last Thursday of every month at the Crow's Nest Officer's Club in downtown St. John's.

"It's not all traditional singing but it is unaccompanied," says Linda. "We've made it clear that there are no instruments allowed. Our take on it is that there are a thousand places where you can play an instrument but not that many places where you can hear unaccompanied singing."

"People sing all kinds of songs, and some do songs with choruses that all hands can join in on. At the end of every night, Joy the bartender sings us out with *We'll Meet*

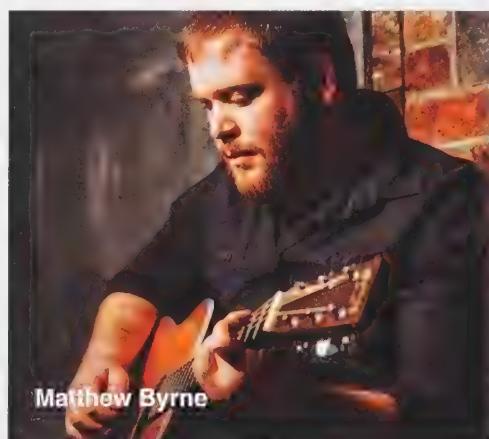
Joe Byrne, Pat Byrne, & Baxter Wareham

Again. It's really nice. It's only two hours but you always come away feeling good."

As part of the vanguard of musicians who brought Newfoundland folk music out of the kitchen and into recording studios and concert halls, Joe and Linda feel that respect and appreciation for traditional music has grown over the years.

"During the folk revival, I can remember the responses of audiences to bands like Figgy Duff," says Joe. "People would come up to them and say, 'What are you playing that old stuff for?' We had the same reaction with the Breakwater Boys. Someone came up to us once and asked, 'Do you sing any Charlie Pride?' People didn't accept traditional music being done in public as they would have around the kitchen table."

"I think now there is a much greater acceptance of it as a genre. And if you look at who is dancing in front of the stage when The Dardanelles are playing, everyone of them is between the ages of 15 and 25. There is more of an interest in traditional music now than there ever was before."



Matthew Byrne



Michael Doucet & Lâcher Prise

Iconic Cajun fiddler recounts a life lived in Louisiana and the storied musicians who inspired him.

By Tony Montague

Mardi Gras 2018 in New Orleans. Cajun fiddle maestro Michael Doucet is strolling with friends through streets filled with revellers—his ears, eyes, and mind wide open to the craziness.

Like everyone else, he's wearing a carnival mask. Outside a favourite local watering hole he gets talking to a woman in a pink dress and big pink wig. Turns out she's a singer, guitarist, and songwriter from the city. And despite the mask, she recognizes the man behind it by the give-away tufts of white hair on either side of the head.

"We talked about music and said we should get together to play—so we did that the following week, and soon after we played our first gig," says the genial Doucet, who lives in Lafayette, some 200 kilometres northwest of the Crescent City.

"We've been playing music together ever since—that was Sarah Quintana."

The day is recalled in *Walkin' on a Mardis Gras Day* on Doucet's latest release, *Lâcher Prise (Letting Go)*, recorded with a new outfit, also named Lâcher Prise—himself on fiddle and lead vocals, Quintana on acoustic guitar and vocals, Chad Viator on electric guitar, Chris French on bass, and Jim Kolacek on drums.

But the song isn't what you might expect. Rather than uptempo

party music, it's a hauntingly beautiful reflection on lost love, set to the slow, steady, and syncopated marching-band beat of a snare drum.

"Everybody says, 'Oh, Mardi Gras, you just have fun, you get crazy and drunk'. But sometimes you don't feel that good, and Mardi Gras is a kind of magical day when you can go through these different moods and times. Things happen that weren't in your plan, and disappoint you. But you don't stop, you keep on walking, and then you hear everything else, like a great brass band, and you have beads thrown at you. So there's something on the other side of that door. The song is kind of a lament—and Sarah is the 'pink-wigged woman'."

Lâcher Prise isn't quite what you might expect from Doucet either. The music is from southwest Louisiana alright, but it's not necessarily Cajun. The album's musical equivalent of crab stew—one of Doucet's favourite local dishes—includes zydeco, swamp rock, and 19th century European dance music, with flavours of classical music and New Orleans jazz. While the tempo and character of the songs vary, all are played with the same verve and palpable sense of fun and spontaneity.

"My label, Compass, wanted me to do a solo album, and go to Nashville to record with some of the musicians there. But I said, 'Man, we got some great musicians here in southwest Louisiana'. So we did it in Lafayette, in three days. The title is kind of the theme of the whole record. In Buddhism, it means renunciation, when you let go of everything, and really become yourself."

Most of the songs on *Lâcher Prise* are Doucet originals, but there's also a dark and bluesy version of swamp-pop pioneer Bobby Charles's *He's Got All The Whiskey*, and a rollicking take on zydeco

accordionist Boozoo Chavis's *Lula, Lula, Don't You Go To Bingo*. "Cause she's going to lose her honey and her money. It's infectious. We didn't know how to begin or end that song but we just went for it—and that was the only take we did. No overdubs or anything. Kind of magic."

Water, Water is also bright and strong, with a wicked backbeat and a great singalong chorus that belies the desperate events behind Doucet's lyrics.

"Three years ago there was a rain cell that just stayed over Lafayette parish. It rained 24 inches in 24 hours, and everything flooded. You had to get through by tractor—that's how deep the water was. We have a problem with water but it's only activated by people who try to 'help us'. One of the lines—where you can't really tell what I'm singing—sounds like, 'An American rain drowning out the French'. But it's really 'American reign'."

Cajuns are tough and resilient in the face of natural disasters but their language has struggled against an onslaught of American English.

"Back in 1970 when they took the census there were supposedly one million French-speaking people in southwest Louisiana. In 2000, there were less than 100,000. Some people sing in French who don't actually know it.

"It's nice that it's still in the music but as a practical language, unfortunately, it's gone. There are a lot of schools, bilingual schools, trying to push it. But ours is an oral language—we learned from our parents or grandparents, and they learned from theirs. For speaking French in North America it's a direct line back to 1604 in Acadia. I try to perpetuate it as much as I can."

Doucet learned Cajun fiddle from French-speaking old-timers—above all Dennis McGee and Canray Fontenot.

"Dennis played music from the 1800s in a very old style, twin fiddles. One fiddler will play the lead and the second plays more of a lower baritone in a percussive, chordal accompaniment. You had to do second for a long time before you actually got the lead part."

The earliest inspiration, however, came from within Doucet's family.

"I had an uncle called T Will who lived a couple of fields from where we did in the country—and he played jazz and piano, and had a band. He was a guy my mom told me not to hang around with—so I did.

"He was my biggest influence, but you couldn't take his fiddle out of the house, so I stayed there a lot. I can remember three songs that I totally learned. I started out playing that fiddle, and today it's in the Louisiana State Museum—right next to Louis Armstrong's trumpet and Clifton Chenier's accordion."

For the past 37 years, Doucet and his band, Beausoleil, have led the revival of Cajun music, and at the Folk Alliance International in New Orleans in January the band received a Lifetime Achievement Award. Lâcher Prise opens up new territories for his creative expression without leaving the rich musical soil of Louisiana.

"We have a tour of California with both Lâcher Prise and Beausoleil, then a tour of the East [Coast]. But I'm more into recording with these people, and keeping it like that. We have plenty more music—we did this album a year and a half ago, and there's almost an entire new album's worth of songs since then. It's a whole lot of fun playing together."





Québec trio mixes traditional tunes with clever contemporary arrangements.

By Marc Bolduc

Since first appearing on Québec's traditional music radar with their debut album in 2017, the band É-T-É (which could mean 'summer' but is solely based on the first names of its members Élisabeth Giroux, Thierry Clouette, and Élisabeth Moquin) has not ceased to impress trad music fans, both with its liveliness and its distinctive musical signature.

Within two years the band, which features fiddle, bouzouki, cello, and vocals, has brilliantly succeeded in charting a unique sound.

This trio might never have existed had it not been for several chance encounters, and the group formed gradually over time. The two Élisabeths "discovered" each other while at an outdoor jam session in

Montréal. They began playing together and exploring Québec's traditional music as a duo. At the time, Moquin was studying in the traditional music program at the Joliette Cégep (College), where she met Thierry Clouette. He soon joined his sound to that of the emerging duo.

One thing led to another and the band began doing shows. This gave them an incentive to record some of their repertoire, as an album could be used as a business card for promoters or at showcases.

"It was to show everyone that we were taking this project seriously, that it was close to our hearts," explains Moquin, who goes by the nickname "La Moquine." That album, *Le boire des minuits* (*The Midnight Drink*), was an adventure for the trio as they did not yet know one another very well.

The recording process allowed them to discover one another's musical worlds. Giroux, for instance, was already a veteran cellist—even at her young age—and well versed in studio work but a newbie in leading her own projects. For her, the album was an enlightening experiment.

"We made the arrangements over time in a

somewhat disjointed way...we jammed, we tried new things, we learned to sing together. We got to know each other through the process. It wasn't always clear but the result was an album that still makes me happy when I listen to it."

Clouette summarizes: "We came up with all kinds of ideas for our repertoire. We had compositions and ideas for arrangements even though we weren't necessarily following an artistic direction. The process lasted for about a year and a half, like a long brainstorm.

"That's where we developed some creative habits and some working habits that really helped us for what came after."

Le boire des minuits, a clever mix of traditional music with contemporary arrangements, was well received by critics. The band's hard work was recognized when they were awarded the Québec Music Council's Opus Prize for Discovery of the Year in 2017-18. Explains Élisabeth Moquin, "It's an immense honour to be named Discovery of the Year, across all categories...among all these great musicians, great styles, and great talent. It gave us a kick in the...

[laughs], a good slap on the back.”

Encouraged by this warm welcome and the positive talk around the album, É-T-É performed more shows. They gained onstage experience and a certain ease of interpretation. The band enjoyed playing together and, over time, was better able to define its musical identity, even if that is still somewhat in the making.

Says Clouette, “With time our playing level, as individuals and as a group, rose a notch.”

Moquin adds, “We wanted...to create new arrangements for our own personal pleasure and to evolve in our music, in our sound.”

According to Giroux, “We learned how... to listen to each other, to put on a good show, but we also pushed our style farther. We defined our sound. We were more rigorous in the arrangement process, both for studio preparation and for shows.”

The making of a second album thus seemed self-evident, part of the natural continuation of this trajectory. By the band’s own admission, *Les 4 roses* (*The Four Roses*) is a more structured album,

with a clearer vision and a common artistic direction.

Moquin explains, “We were really happy with our first album but we knew we could go farther and make it more complex. We could create whole pieces, not just medleys of reels.”

Clouette agrees: “That’s the principal difference, I think, in the creative process between the first and second albums. We were less scattered and that helped us focus our time and efforts in the right way.”

Although *Les 4 roses* takes its name from a tune, and the band was inspired to build the album around a theme of roses, they made space for many other ideas as well.

Says Moquin, “We did not force ourselves to compose and we also didn’t refuse anyone’s compositions. We took the pieces we had each created and arranged them together.”

Les 4 roses certainly confirms this newfound musical maturity and the balance between inventiveness and tradition flows very easily. New compositions in a traditional vein, such as *L’Épineuse*, rub shoul-

ders with pieces from the repertoire of great tradition-bearers (for instance, the *Majeurs et vaccinés* medley).

Similarly, contemporary texts (*Homme ou Le forgeron*) are combined with traditional songs, such as *Tarsil* or *Le moine Simon*.

The music moves in a seamless transition between the two universes, traditional and contemporary, and is always presented with great artistic coherence.

The complicity among the members of É-T-É is almost palpable and can be heard throughout the 10 tracks of the album. Giroux, the most experienced musician in this trio, best expresses this vibrant and contagious energy that emanates from *Les 4 roses*.

“Thierry and Élisabeth are 10 and 11 years younger than me, and it freaks me out to see where they are going musically. They are learning so fast and are so intelligent and talented. They inspire me and teach me every second I spend with them. I feel privileged to do all of this with them.”

Just by listening, the privilege can be ours as well.





Mike Tod

Calgary-based podcaster delves deep into the history of Canadian folk music.

By les siemieniuk

In early December, our esteemed *Penguin Eggs* editor, Roddy Campbell, received an email with a subject heading that read, “The Folk Podcast Series Hits Top 15 On Apple’s Music Podcast Chart”.

His interest was piqued and he asked me to follow this up and write a few words for this issue. Seeing anything associated with folk music at the top of a mainstream list is always intriguing and, for some reason, surprising to us all.

Turns out Mike Tod, the brains and brawn behind *The Folk*, was also pleasantly surprised at the results.

“I had no idea what to expect. I just told

the stories I had gathered because podcasting is the new way to tell stories.”

And what stories he does tell! Stories of Edson, Alberta’s, the Romaniuk family and their intertwining with the Carter family. Stories of a Russian religious sect on the Prairies. The grand story of the Red River Valley. The ballad of Canada’s most famous folklorist, Edith Fowke. A terrific tale of two black Maritimers, Brent and Harry, and their bluegrass adventure—The Birch Mountain Boys.

In this season of *The Folk*, there are 13 episodes in all, one from each of the 10 provinces and three territories.

I was personally glad to hear Episodes 6 and 9, featuring two Canadian musicians I was fascinated by early in my exposure to Canadian folk music. Charlie Panagoniak from Nunavut and Jean Carignon—who was driving taxi in Montreal when I first heard him play in the late ’60s—deserve to be Canadian musical household names.

What made Tod want to tell these stories?

It seems he has been working up to this for most of his 30 years and it’s been an interesting journey to this point for Mike Tod.

Mike told me he discovered Bob Dylan as a kid growing up in Winnipeg and as he delved into Dylan’s world he was lead to Pete Seeger.

“Pete Seeger was the gatekeeper to Lead Belly and that begat the Carter Family and so on. I was hooked on this music. It was so raw and real.”

In 2010, Tod had made his way west as a lot Canadians are wont to do, to the promised land of Alberta, to study communications at the University of Calgary. He found in the bowels of the student union building that there is this community radio station—CJSW—and volunteers do programmes.

What better way to hone your communications skills than by doing radio shows? And—bonus—at CJSW you were encouraged to do radio shows with music you loved—and he loved old-timey music.

He also began a career as a musician

playing this music and has several releases of songs he has collected as a solo artist. Mike plays mostly these days with guitarist Nathan M. Godfrey, and as Godfrey & Tod they are a fixture on the Calgary folk music scene.

So as he learned how to do radio shows and collect songs he came to the realization that, "half of folk music is context. Songs are written in a certain time, under conditions of the time, and by people of the time. It's important."

He had unearthed his passion—the digging to find out the who, what, when, where, and why of the music.

And dig he did, in earnest in Calgary and Alberta. He wrote a book on Alberta folk music and did a documentary film called *Where the Sage Brush Grows*. He also put together a web series available on Vimeo called *The Calgary Collection*, vignettes and portraits of young and old performers in the Calgary folk music scene.

In addition to earning his street cred and practical experience in folk music, he took a couple of years at York University to obtain

a master's degree in ethnomusicology.

Back in Calgary as a trained scholar, ideas he had been kicking around for years took hold. He now had enough experience and credibility to raise more support and some grant funding to actually pull together the ideas he had mulled over for years.

As a musician who plays old-timey music, Tod brings true passion to his work and his ethnomusicology training brings a scholarly discipline to his research.

He has to be enthusiastic and focused as *The Folk* podcast is more than 15 hours of story, archival sound, and music and, if you follow the transcripts on the website, terrific pictures and photographs as well.

After the concept of doing a series encompassing all of Canada, Tod started calling knowledgeable people in different regions and asking them, "Tell me a story about someone from your area". Then the research began.

"Libraries are your best friend. They are everywhere and have people who will gladly look up things for you and get back to you with what they find." One thing leads

to another.

"I think I would make a good detective; I LOVE tracing things. Who learned what from who? Where did it all come from?"

So, in addition to being a newly successful podcaster, a working musician with a master's degree in ethnomusicology, a web video broadcaster, and, when needed, a good carpenter and cabinet maker, Mike Tod gave credence to the popular, slightly misquoted words of Alberta writer William Patrick Kinsella: "Build it and they will come".

It seems to have worked out exactly that way for Mike Tod. He built it with passion and skill and—sure enough—they did come. And as for No. 15 on the iTunes chart? Actually, in the following weeks, *The Folk* peaked at No. 9.

"The Folk, an investigation into the true stories and history of folk music in Canada," appeared once a week for 14 weeks. You can experience it at <https://www.thefolkpodcast.com/> or Apple Podcasts or Google Play or Stitcher or Tunein.



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FACTOR CALLBACK



Baaba Maal

The Senegalese global superstar emphasizes the importance of community activism.

By Dan Rosenberg

“Don’t mention my name,” Baaba Maal remembered telling a Senegalese deejay the first time he performed live on radio. More than four decades before he recorded *The Black Panther* soundtrack, Baaba Maal had second thoughts about the chance that most musicians consider a big break.

“I didn’t want my father to know I wasn’t studying at the university.”

“Since I was young, maybe 10 years old, people turned their heads when I sang,” Maal told me as we sat down to talk at Toronto’s Aga Khan Museum, where he spent a week doing an artistic residency.

“In our town [Podor, Senegal], people would gather at the centre every night, build a fire, and perform music, and before the end of the evening, they’d always say, ‘Baaba, you have to sing’.” But his family had other ideas.

“My father wanted me to be a doctor or a lawyer, something respectable for him. I was a very good student but I was hiding my wish to be a musician,” Maal recalled. That’s when he was invited to a Senegalese radio station, and decided to perform a song called *Taara*.

You can probably guess what happened next when he returned home that night.

“I was alone with my dad and that song came on the radio,” Maal recollects. “There was one entire minute of silence before he responded and asked me, ‘Is that you?’ After 30 seconds of silence, I answered, ‘Yes, that’s me.’”

Baaba Maal then recounted the conversation word for word he had that night with his father, who at that time worked as a

muezzin, performing the traditional Muslim call to prayer: “If you sing, and people can learn something, you can inspire their lives. Then, I’m with you. If you just want to sing to be famous and meet girls, then I’m not with you.”

Maal made his father a promise: “Every single song I write will have a meaning for our community.”

He kept his promise. Baaba Maal uses his stage as a platform to campaign for human rights. He has fought against female genital mutilation, worked with the United Nations Development Program to combat the spread of AIDS/HIV, served as an Oxfam global ambassador to combat the food crisis in the Sahel region of West Africa, and is now a UN ambassador to combat desertification.

Baaba Maal recently concluded a week-long residency at the Aga Khan Museum, a leading North American centre of Islamic art and culture. Maal was there for Black History Month, teaching local schoolchildren about West African singing, percus-

sion, and, most important, how they can use music to fight for social justice.

How did he become an expert on West African culture? At college, Maal met blind guitarist Mansour Seck, a local griot (West African musician and oral historian).

"We decided to go on an adventure, travelling for two years to over 300 places in Mali, Guinea, Mauritania, and Ivory Coast."

Their journey started back in 1980, when the duo had begun gaining notoriety from their (no longer anonymous) appearances on Senegalese radio. They wanted to learn from the "elderly musicians who were fascinated by my voice and Mansour's. But they couldn't believe that we were so brave to go on the road."

Maal and Seck travelled village to village, learning folksongs in each town, places with their own unique culture, and centuries-old songs. The trip was entirely spontaneous: pre-cellphones, pre-Internet, and cashless.

"We didn't get money. There was no 'cost' of what we were doing. People just shared whatever they had. Every place we went, we met fans who welcomed us into their houses. We'd stay there one to two weeks until we'd go to the next village. People would come and ask us, 'After this village, please come to our village'. They'd prepare cows and goats [for feasts] and give us clothes."

Of all the places they visited, they were most fascinated by the town of Goudiry, near the Senegalese border with Mali.

"Ninety per cent of the people in Goudiry are griots," Maal explained. "We spent six months there. Every night, after dinner, we'd sit down and play for two, three, even four hours. We'd learn their songs, they'd learn ours. Decades later, I still hear them singing our songs and we're still singing theirs."

How on Earth did these two young guys pull this off: cashless, no itinerary, going to country after country? Our interview was in English, which I learned was just one of six languages Baaba Maal speaks, five fluently: French, English, Wolof, Fulani, and a little Moorish (from Mauritania).

"We communicated mostly in Fulani," Maal recalled. He then elaborated how today's political borders in West Africa bear little resemblance to historical and cultural ones.

"The Fulani are in all these countries: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea, and Nigeria"

While griots maintained their traditions as oral historians in West Africa (often able to recount centuries of family stories through song), Baaba Maal, who isn't from a griot family, used a cassette recorder back in the 1980s when conducting his research.

"After dinner and we'd sit down and perform...and there would be eight to 10 cassette recorders taping our songs so people could share the music with their family members in other places," Maal remembered nostalgically. "You could hear the goats as part of the ambiance of the music. Then, when someone goes to France, in the cold winter, in a small apartment, and they hear the names of their family, brothers, sisters, and friends, it keeps them connected to their roots."

"Mansour and I were keeping communities in touch with their families through these cassettes. We were, in a way, the modern griots. Today, people come up to us and say, 'It's the best music you ever did, much better than what you're doing now,'" he added with a giant smile across his face.

Of course, since then Baaba Maal has become a global superstar, with a Grammy nomination for *Firin in Fouta*, arguably the greatest Afropop recording of all time, as well as timeless masterpieces of Senegalese folk music, including *Mi Yeewnii* and *Djam Leeli*. The latter is the groundbreaking recording that was the result of Maal's two-year research/road trip.

Then there were the collaborations with Mumford & Sons, Peter Gabriel, and 10 motion-picture soundtracks including *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Black Panther*.

At the workshops at the Aga Khan Museum, the dozens of local schoolchildren were eager to learn about talking drums and Fulani singing. They were especially dazzled when Maal demonstrated guitar fingering techniques typically used on West African folk instruments such as the kora or ngoni.

The kids in the workshops were extremely curious to learn what it was like working on *The Black Panther* soundtrack, and how the film was received in West Africa. After all, despite reports that the United States listed Wakanda as an actual trade partner, it is a fictional place.

"The plot about a king dying and how a prince battles to take over the country, there are many stories in Senegal about this," Maal explained. "It is easy to adapt the story of a fictional Wakanda."

He then told me how the film became enormously popular in Senegal. "When audiences hear the talking drum...for them, it's a Senegalese movie. People nearly fall down when they hear my voice."

Just like during many of his concerts, Baaba Maal used the stage at Aga Khan Museum to make his audience aware about acute political problems. In the middle of his joyous show, he said, "I'm sorry about bringing up troubling news. This song, *Baayo*, is about orphans, children who are displaced by war, conflict, and terror."

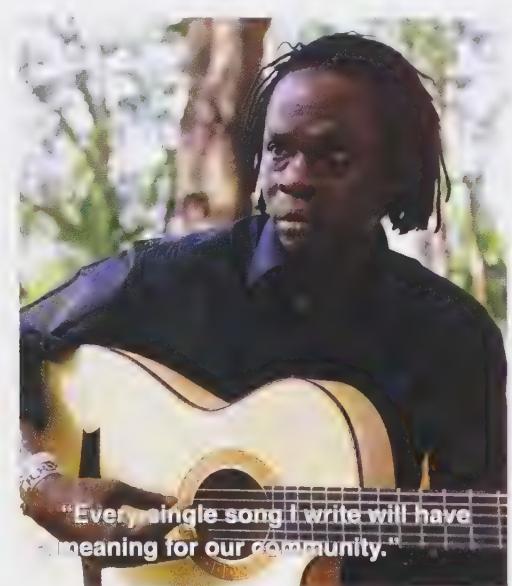
During that performance, Maal added English lines to the Fulani song, urging societies to spend more on education.

Baaba Maal's talent and his activism have brought about real change in West Africa. I asked him if he longs for those early days travelling through rural West Africa.

"I miss it so much," he answered. "I'm going to try and do it and go back on the road and see what will happen." This time, perhaps, it might be a different experience. He is now a megastar.

"Wherever I go, people follow me and start filming. But I really want to go [on a road trip like that] again."

I hope, too, that he goes. That way, for all of us who can't travel to West Africa, Baaba Maal's urgent messages about climate change and gender equality would be breathtaking to witness streamed live during the process of creation.





Afro-Métis Nation

They honour the legacy of their ancestors and highlight the injustices they faced.
By Pat Langston

“Afro-Métis” may look like a word you should know but odds are you’ve never seen it or encountered the fraught history it encapsulates unless you’ve heard The Afro-Métis Nation’s album *Constitution*. Created by four musicians and one poet, all of mixed black and Indigenous ancestry, the musically diverse, no-holds-barred album of original and adapted material honours ancestors and others who have survived and ultimately thrived in the face of harsh marginalization in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia.

Some of the album’s creators—all of them have roots in Nova Scotia—were largely unaware of the significance of their mixed heritage before joining forces on the project in 2016.

“I was totally oblivious. It was just some fact in my background,” says musician Chris White, who is of black and Mi’kmaq heritage and co-founded the Ottawa Folk

Festival.

“I didn’t know there were 46 black communities in Nova Scotia and they were right beside the Indigenous communities. They were both in the worst possible parts of the province; they both got shafted because it was all about economics. That’s why there was lots of intermingling.”

Those of mixed blood didn’t advertise the fact, he says. Black or Indigenous, you were already in a minority, so why double your oppression by acknowledging your full heritage?

White likely would have remained oblivious had his cousin, Toronto-based poet George Elliott Clarke, not contacted him a few years ago about collaborating on an album.

Clarke, former Canadian Parliament poet laureate, had been working with another contributor to the record, Toronto’s powerhouse singer (and his and White’s cousin) Shelley Hamilton. That’s when Clarke’s daughter suggested that he and Hamilton make an album.

Intrigued, Clarke says he suddenly realized, “Gosh, I’ve got a lot of cousins involved in music.” So he reached out to another Toronto relative, veteran musician ‘Sugar Plum’ Croxen, and to White with the vague idea of making an album.

Clarke and Hamilton had been doing

some research into their own ancestry, and, says Clarke, “When [some of us] got together in the summer of 2016, we realized that we all had a black-Indigenous heritage and said, ‘Let’s sing about it!’”

Hamilton was immediately onboard.

“I’m all about knowing other people’s histories, and this is another part of Canadian history I can tell people about,” she says—as was Croxen, a proud member of Nova Scotia’s Eastern Woodland Métis Nation.

“George and I had been talking about doing an album since 2010,” he says. “I participated in this project for the Afro-Métis awareness, the music, and (I hoped) I would have fun on the journey!”

Ottawa musician Russ Kelley, whose black ancestry includes some Indigenous blood, is the only non-family member of the fivesome.

“I struggle with writer’s block big time, and I was wandering around desperately looking for something that would get me writing,” he says. “When Chris mentioned the project, I thought, ‘If I put myself on the line, then something might happen.’ Fortunately it did, and I got two songs out of it.”

The album, a continually surprising blend of Celtic, African, Indigenous, and other musical influences that was nominated for a Canadian Folk Music Award in 2019, is direct and often raw.

Clarke's *For the Murdered and the Missing*, for instance, is an unforgettable indictment of a country and government that have stood by during centuries of what Clarke can only call a massacre. It's actually poetry and so recited, not sung, but his delivery has a furious musical conviction.

The piece is framed as a series of questions—"Why she gotta go missing? Why she gotta be murdered?"—which, says Clarke, are meant to echo civil rights and ban-the-bomb songs such as *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*?

Written some years ago, the piece also leaves no doubt as to his position on Indigenous justice issues. Clarke came under attack earlier this year over a scheduled lecture on those issues at the University of Regina and his friendship with poet Stephen Brown, who was imprisoned for the 1995 murder of Pamela George, a First Nations woman. If you ever doubted Clarke's stance, this piece alone will set you straight.

Croxon's contributions include his loose, bluesy *Bannock and Beans* ("Bannock and beans, that's what my kukum made

for me / Bannock and beans, it's okay with me") and other tunes, including *People are People* ("Black, white or red / Some are happy, some are sad / Prejudice makes me so mad").

White, accompanied by Ken Whiteley on banjo and other musicians, pays tribute in the simply titled *William Andrew* to the textured life of his grandfather, Rev. Capt. William A. White.

The son of American slaves, William White was the first black commissioned officer in the Canadian Expeditionary Force when he served during the First World War and he was the Canadian Army's only black chaplain. He later became a leader in Nova Scotia's black community.

Elsewhere, White honours Viola Desmond, the civil rights activist whose refusal to leave the whites-only section of a Nova Scotia theatre in 1946 landed her likeness on our current \$10 bill. *Singing Viola* is "an upbeat song about racial discrimination but it's meant to be hopeful," says White.

Hamilton's contributions include *Skin*, an a cappella track about the self-destructive

advantages blacks with lighter skin can have over those with darker skin. She also sings *More of This Land*, her funny, biting song about the idiocy of assuming you have more claim to this country than someone whose ancestors actually pre-date yours.

If the album has "a tenor that makes you uncomfortable, then we need to discuss it, and that's what art is about," she says. "I'd like people to take away that this is not just an album of music but a document of the history of people who didn't have a voice."

Kelley has contributed *It's a Wonder*, a celebration of ancestors who escaped slavery so he could walk free, and *We Need a Lot of Love*, with its 1960s vibe of optimism that we can overcome hatred if we stand together.

"The thing about racism is you never know where it will raise its head. It could be just a glance, but it's always a surprise," he says. "Music gives comfort and tells you you're not alone."

Speaking of the entire album, he says, "I think these songs will resonate across races. Everyone is more mixed than we know."

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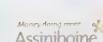
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Ken Whiteley

After five decades, veteran musician still revels in making roots music recordings.

By Roger Levesque

So much music. So many insights.

From the sheer satisfaction of strumming and singing to his deepest or more light-hearted songs, to his work interpreting the tradition, Ken Whiteley has passed on an amazing legacy of tunes. Still, it's hard to think of a set of songs as personal or reflective as the recent *Calm In The Eye Of The Storm*, his first album in four years.

"I think we live in very troubled times and that obviously impacts us all as individuals, so this is really the response to 'how do we find peace and calm?' and that has both a personal, social, political, and spiritual

component. It's a reflection of my own journey, both the themes and where I'm at personally, from the 55 years I've been playing music in public and soaking all this other stuff up."

As Whiteley hits 69 this spring, it's hard to think of anyone else who is such an institution of Canadian folk music, a multi-instrumentalist and multi-linguist in the sub-genres and dialects of folk and blues traditions, a curious man with a youthful spirit at heart. All that and his big hair, as if he might be a hermit lost for decades on some deserted island or mountainous retreat.

The album's opening track, *Lay My Burden By The River*, was inspired by a month-long trip to the Himalayas and the source of the Ganges River that Whiteley made in 2000, an experience that had to evoke a song if anything would. Not all the tunes start from such exotic signposts but, either way, it's an entertaining set.

Friends and family figure significantly in

his musical backing and themes. The title track refers to the bond he shares with his wife, Ellen Manney, part of his life for 38 years, and the closing song, *Let Me Rest A While*, echoes that bond. *Tune Me Up* nods to musical friend bluesman Yank Rochell.

Several tracks address larger social issues, the world crisis of refugees and attitudes on immigration in *I Hear The Wind*, and then, *Greed Is A Flawed Organizing Principle*, a title that speaks for itself. Another tune, *Stephen's Last Game*, looks at the need for refuge up close, inspired Woody Guthrie style by a newspaper story about an eviction.

Tumultuous times seem to support the call for music to comfort the soul. Whiteley hears the call.

"The German word zeitgeist roughly translates as 'spirit of the times' and there are different challenges at different times, but I think we're continuing on a trend of challenging ourselves and, I think, it's not going to get easier but harder as things like artificial intelligence and climate disrupt-

tion continue to role down on us. All we can hope is that, collectively, we learn to be kinder to each other and recognize the responsibility and connectivity that we all have.”

Whiteley borrows from the gospel tradition directly and as an inspiration. *You Better Mind* came from the Georgia Sea Island singers, while *King's Highway* has been a favourite for decades, both given fresh updates. His own *Give It Up To God* was written at a Caribbean yoga retreat.

“I’ve performed a lot of full-on gospel over the years and for 18 years now I’ve done a Sunday afternoon gospel series in Toronto that runs the gamut in varieties of faith, from all-Jews to Indigenous people to all-Christians. I understand the word ‘god’ puts some people off but for me, personally, it’s a simple expression about wanting to connect with the divine.”

With a contrasting hint of secular awe, he’s caught up in science and quantum physics on *A Talk With Time*, and with the microscopic world inside us on *Beneath Our Skin*.

“I don’t see science and religion as separate camps. They are both ways of trying to express truth. We function as if we’re complete individuals and yet our bodies are made up of billions of living organisms that have some kind of consciousness. It’s fun to point that out, just as the relativity of time is not fixed as we usually think it is.”

One truth of Ken Whiteley is that he’s a deep thinker with a strong work ethic.

My call interrupted an “odds’n’sods” day at Whiteley’s Toronto recording studio as he was putting touches on several different projects he’s producing. To date, he has overseen nearly 140 albums, inspiring dozens of award nominations, and two Junos, and some eight million sales, many through the label he co-founded, Borealis Records.

“I love making records because it involves different parts of the brain besides performing. When you’re producing another artist there’s the intellectual part and the psychological part, like how to get the best performance out of them, what musicians to use, and how they’re going to compliment that artist; all kinds of aspects.”

Apart from Whiteley’s mess of guitars and other strings, keyboards, vibes, and washtub bass, *Calm In The Eye Of The Storm* features a cast of about 20, regulars such as his

son, Ben, on string bass and drums, bassists George Koller and Gord Mowat, Cathy Fink’s banjo and Njacko Backo’s flexatone. Then there are eight more singers, starting with Eve Goldberg and two sets of sisters, Nikki and Gloria Brown, and Amoy and Ciceal Levy, his vocal collaborators over some 25 years now.

Despite that list, most tracks only involve two or three or four musicians. Less can be more listenable, and who knows how you might be listening these days? Whiteley has mixed feelings about the changes that have taken place in the streaming era.

“Artists still enjoy working on recordings but it used to be that you could tour and recoup your expenses from album sales. Folk music is still a little more CD-friendly than pop music but there’s still a decline in product sales. I’m an artist, I love to do this and I feel there’s still value in packaging songs that somehow hang together, that make a collective statement, and I’m pretty eclectic so the album is really my own playlist.”

Whiteley was born in the U.S., the son of Canadian teachers who moved back to Canada when he was five. He still has a kinship with his American relatives and enjoys his dual citizenship to tour down there off and on, putting in about 60 to 70 shows a year

across the continent.

That’s less than he used to because he likes to spend more time at home now, but he is happy with the Home Routes tours that have set up a circuit for house concerts across Canada.

“Whether it’s somebody’s living room or a huge auditorium, a full room always feels good.”

Some of them come no doubt to see Whiteley the legend, who (along with his older brother, Chris Whiteley) was a member of the seminal Original Sloth Band in the 1960s, and an early ambassador for folk music in Canada. Or maybe they’re drawn to Whiteley the walking musicologist who might trace the connections between Son House, Muddy Waters, Johnny Winters, and the Rolling Stones.

Whatever the reason, chances are they’re won over by the supple force of Whiteley’s warm personality and skill at telling a tale in music.

“Having an understanding of folk music is incredibly valuable but I still see myself as an artist and part of that is an openness to whatever exists, to whatever your perceptions bring. It’s like a muscle that you exercise and hopefully it stays in shape, and you become part of this larger continuum.”



Ken Whiteley with Amoy and Ciceal Levy

The Dark Arts



Lankum approach traditional Irish music with a modern intensity—a relentless spirit of non-compromise that obliterates perceived past notions. “We’re definitely drawn to dark music,” they tell Colin Irwin.

Irish music is embedded in a gloriously rich, empowering, and provocative folk tradition. From the songs of the travellers to the emigrés who crossed the Atlantic and those in the rural west who held informal dances in the streets when the state and the Catholic Church were so suspicious of house sessions they banned them, traditional music has provided a telling window to Irish history and culture.

Through the Clancy Brothers, The Dubliners, Planxty, the Bothy Band, Moving Hearts, Riverdance, et al, the music has, of course, travelled far and wide and achieved unimaginable popularity around the world since those unenlightened days; but at its best, Irish music still gets to the core of the emotional heart.

A bit more sparingly these days, Christy Moore continues to be the ultimate communicator, while Dervish celebrate their 30th anniversary and Clannad embark on their farewell tour; but if we thought we were reaching the end of an era, there are plenty more taking on their mantle. The brilliant singer and songwriter Lisa O'Neill, for one, and the MacGloinn brothers of Ye Vagabonds for another, but leading the charge are the wonderful Lankum.

Representing the graphic underbelly of Dublin's counterculture, Radie Peat, Cormac Mac Diarmada, and the brothers Ian and Daragh Lynch are well versed and strongly immersed in the history of the music they champion but invest it with a fresh passion and a very modern intensity that obliterates the normal perceived barriers surrounding the genre.

What makes them even more extraordinary is that they've done it in a relentless spirit of non-compromise, paying no heed to the pressures of their own success or the attendant need to accept or acknowledge popular perceptions of public appeal.

This is a band, for example, that open their new album, *The Livelong Day*, with two long tracks weighing in at a total length of

17 minutes, while fiercely resisting all suggestions of radio edits to maximize airplay. This is a band that, invited to appear at the BBC Folk Awards in Belfast in 2018, opted not to perform a big rabbble-rousing number as is the norm on these occasions but the slow, anguished travellers song *What Will We Do If We Have No Money*, sung with howling intensity by Radie Peat sitting on the floor over low drones of pipes and harmonium.

"You can't be worrying about what other people think," says Radie. "It's dangerous to do that. We do whatever it takes to arrange something to reflect the core of the song and we don't ever worry about cutting something short for the radio. If you need 10 minutes for a song, then take 10 minutes; and if you need 12 minutes then take 12 minutes. If it then turns out to be unsuitable for something or other then that's just the way it is—we're unsuitable for a lot of things. We'd never compromise a song. So we stay in our own heads, give ourselves a good talking to, and make sure we do things for the right reasons."

Plenty of experience, knowledge, and research have brought them to this point. While old school friends Radie Peat and Cormac Mac Diarmada are steeped in the folk tradition from childhood, the Lynch brothers were previously entrenched in punk and heavy metal. Ian Lynch is still the proud owner of an Iron Maiden T-shirt but, having ensconced himself at the Dublin Pipers Club and mastered uilleann pipes, he studied Irish and folklore at University College, Dublin, and worked at the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

One of his most celebrated comments is that 'folk is more punk than punk' and, with the band's determination to strip away the hoopla and unearth the raw grit of folk song, it is perhaps not so surprising that reference points commonly applied to Lankum include expressions like 'alternative' and 'psychedelic', while reviewers tend to conjure not only the great names of Irish music past, but left-field acts ranging from Portishead to Tom Waits and My Bloody Valentine.

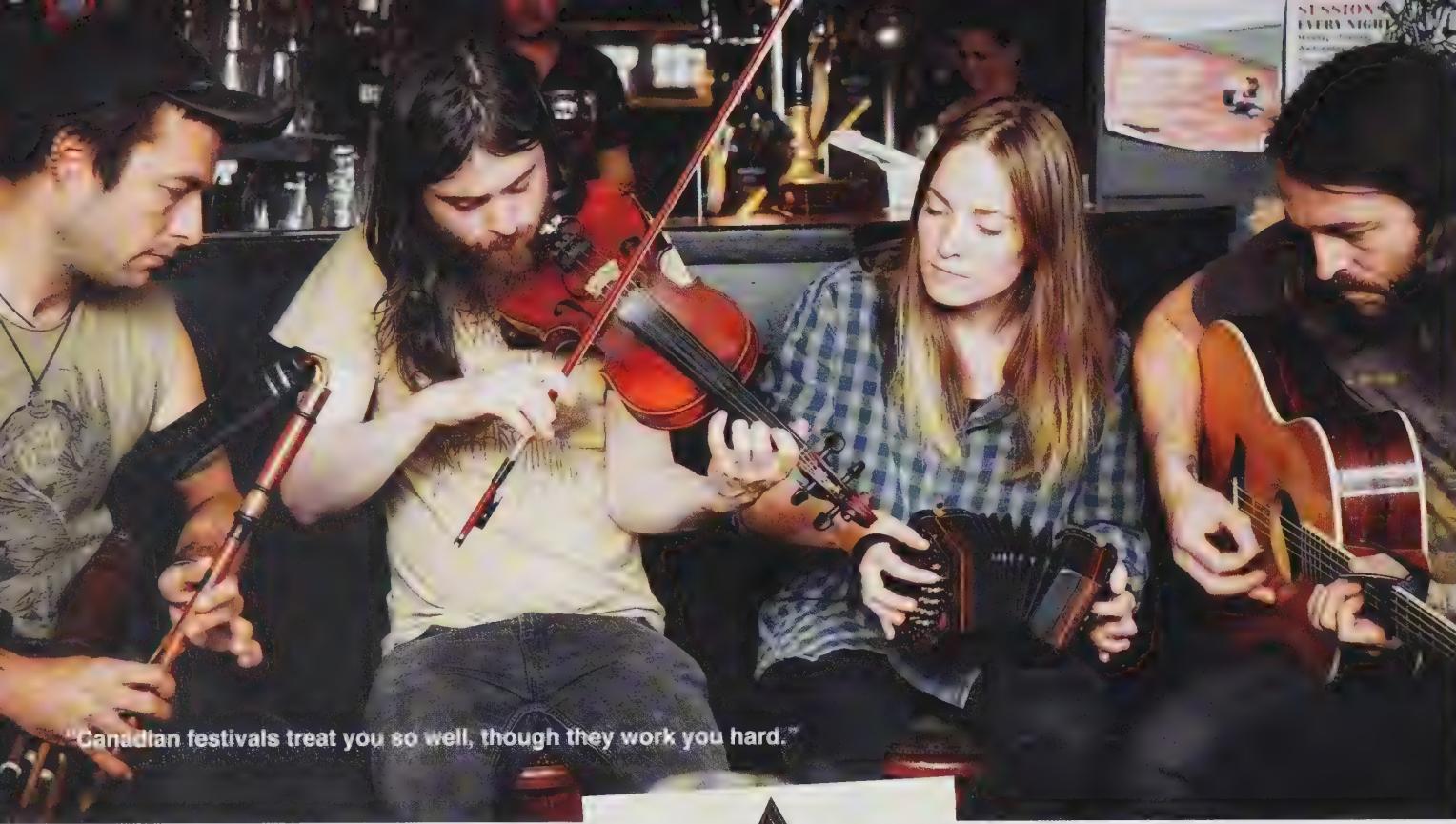
The Livelong Day is full of bold sonic soundscapes, rugged arrangements, and unpredictable twists to underline their radical vision. Eyebrows were certainly raised when the opening track was announced as a 10-minute version of the hackneyed old pub singalong *The Wild Rover*, very possibly the most overdone chorus song in the Irish canon.

Except you won't have heard it done like this before. Instead of the knockabout choruses, we are left with a desperate story of wounded vulnerability. Lankum don't do obvious.

"Well, it seemed obvious to us!" laughs Radie. "We heard a traditional singer called Donal Maguire doing a version of it late at night at a singing festival and it was amazing how it made us feel so differently about the whole story."

"Having heard the song our whole lives it was the first time we'd felt a connection to the person in it. We suddenly heard a lot of truth there. We talked about doing it for a long time and worked on it again and again with different arrangements and different instruments—it's always about finding the arrangement that best exemplifies the song—and tried to give it a sense of anguish. It wasn't a case of, 'Oh, we can't do *The Wild Rover*', it was more, 'if we can love a version of it, why can't everyone else love it, too?'"

Ian: "There's a great quote by Frank Hart: don't judge a song by the company it keeps. We're big believers in giving songs a chance,



"Canadian festivals treat you so well, though they work you hard."

even if they are very hackneyed and people have given up on the song."

Their empathy with the dark side of song is further demonstrated by *Katie Cruel*, another well-trodden song Radie first heard sung by the late Karen Dalton on her 1971 album *In My Own Time*.

"It's one of my favourite traditional songs ever and I've been wanting to do it for a long time. We originally did it for the soundtrack of a film that didn't exist. It was meant to be about the sound of apocalyptic Ireland and *Katie Cruel* was for a particularly bleak part of the film," Radie says.

Ian: "We're definitely drawn to dark music. There's so much darkness in traditional music but a lot of people miss that, they just pick up on the happy-go-lucky stuff."

Underlining the point, Radie mentions she's been listening intently lately to Scott Walker's notoriously avant-garde and infamously disturbing soundtrack *The Childhood Of A Leader*. "It's really unsettling but I love it."

Another of the standout tracks is *Hunting The Wren* (a line from which the album title is drawn), which resulted from a bet between Ian Lynch and Lisa O'Neill when they challenged each other to write a song on a subject of the other's choosing. Ian commissioned O'Neill to write a song about Violet Gibson (would-be assassin of Benito Mussolini pre-Second World War), while her task to him was

a song about the ancient St. Stephen's Day custom in Ireland of sacrificing wrens. Both Lynch and O'Neill rose to the challenge with spectacular results.

Radie Peat's haunting, full-blooded vocals on the track highlight her emergence as one of Ireland's most compelling and uncompromising singers (she was named singer of the year at last year's RTE Folk Music

Awards when Lankum also won best group). Yet she's amazingly unassuming about her singing.

"Well, I grew up playing concertina and tin whistle and stuff and when you put so much time and effort in learning something you think of yourself as an instrumentalist. Singing is just a natural thing. People sometimes call me a sean-nos singer, which I'm not. I'm not from that tradition at all. I do really love singing, but I don't think there's anything particularly impressive about it; I just sing."

Lankum still can't quite believe how far they've come in such a relatively short time to headline festivals and play prestigious tours all round the world. Initially playing just for their own personal satisfaction, they had no expectation or aspirations to break out of their own little circle in Dublin. When mates at parties, people lying



around in squats, and drunks in primitive clubs were the standard audience.

Releasing their self-made debut album *Cold Old Fire* in 2014, they printed just 500 copies and fully expected to be storing most of them under their beds for years after. But people heard something uniquely authentic in their delivery, which chimed with audiences—folk and non-folk alike—exasperated by the limpid uniformity of contemporary music. It was soon obvious that Lankum—or Lynch as they were then—were the real deal, assembling along the way a variety of influential fans, from Christy Moore to Burt Bacharach.

Ian: “Playing Vicar Street in Dublin was a really huge moment—the biggest gig we’d ever done at the time. That was amazing. None of us thought we’d ever be in the position of playing music professionally—something we’d always done for fun. I’d always imagined we’d have day jobs and play music for fun outside of that.”

An important crossroads arrived in 2017 when, conscious of the racial implications of their name Lynch, they changed it to Lankum. Having emerged from a left-wing mindset without expectations of being heard beyond their own political environment, they’d never anticipated the name being heard, let alone cause offence among urban communities in America. As soon as they began to find a market farther afield they realized it could be misinterpreted and had to go.

Ian: “We thought about it for about a year and a half but in the end we didn’t want a name associated with rape and violence. A lot of people said it would ruin everything we’d worked so hard to achieve. When we started we didn’t imagine we’d be playing to people who wouldn’t know our political allegiance, but we kept having to explain ourselves and decided to do it. In this day and age, in the current climate, it’s even more important to make that clear.”

In fact, the repercussions of the name change were minimal. Radie: “A few promoters said nobody would come to see us because they didn’t know who this Lankum band were, but after a few months it was accepted and everything was back to normal.”

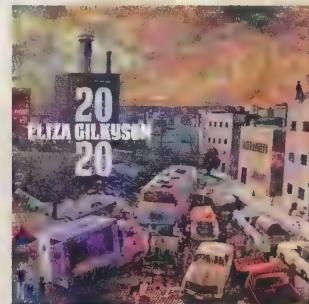
Typical, too, of them to take their new name from one of the grisliest and most gruesome ballads of deception, revenge, and bloody murder.

With a second successful album, *Between The Earth & Sky*, followed by *The Livelong Day*, they haven’t looked back since and now look forward to a summer return to one of their favourite festivals, at Edmonton.

“Canadian festivals treat you so well, though they work you hard,” says Radie. “I remember when we played Edmonton before, it was so hot and I lost my voice. Oh, and the workshops! The workshop sound checks were so chaotic, with 15 or 20 people onstage together. But that way you meet some really interesting people. They kept putting us on with a calypso band from Trinidad called Kobo Town, who were really good. We also played with Eliza Gilkyson and Johnny Goldtooth, who were also great. I’m sure they have some disasters putting people randomly together onstage like that—it’s a real gamble.”

But then gambles are very much part of Lankum’s DNA...

COMPASS RECORDS GROUP CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ARTIST-OWNED INDEPENDENCE



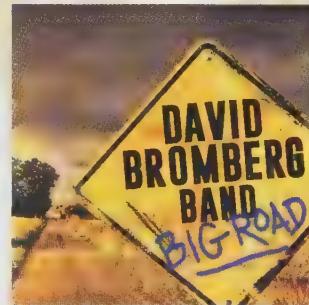
ELIZA GILKYSON – 2020

“She packs a political punch that is as entertaining and blue-collar as the work of Woody Guthrie.” —HOUSTON PRESS



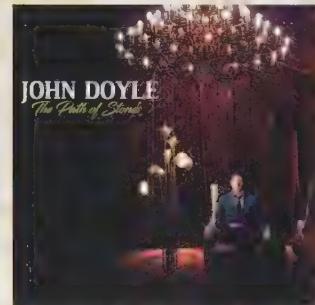
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BITTER BETTER
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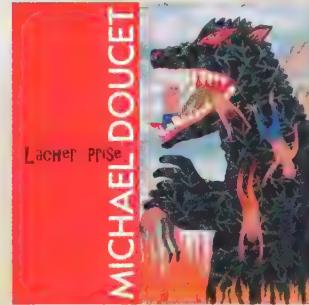
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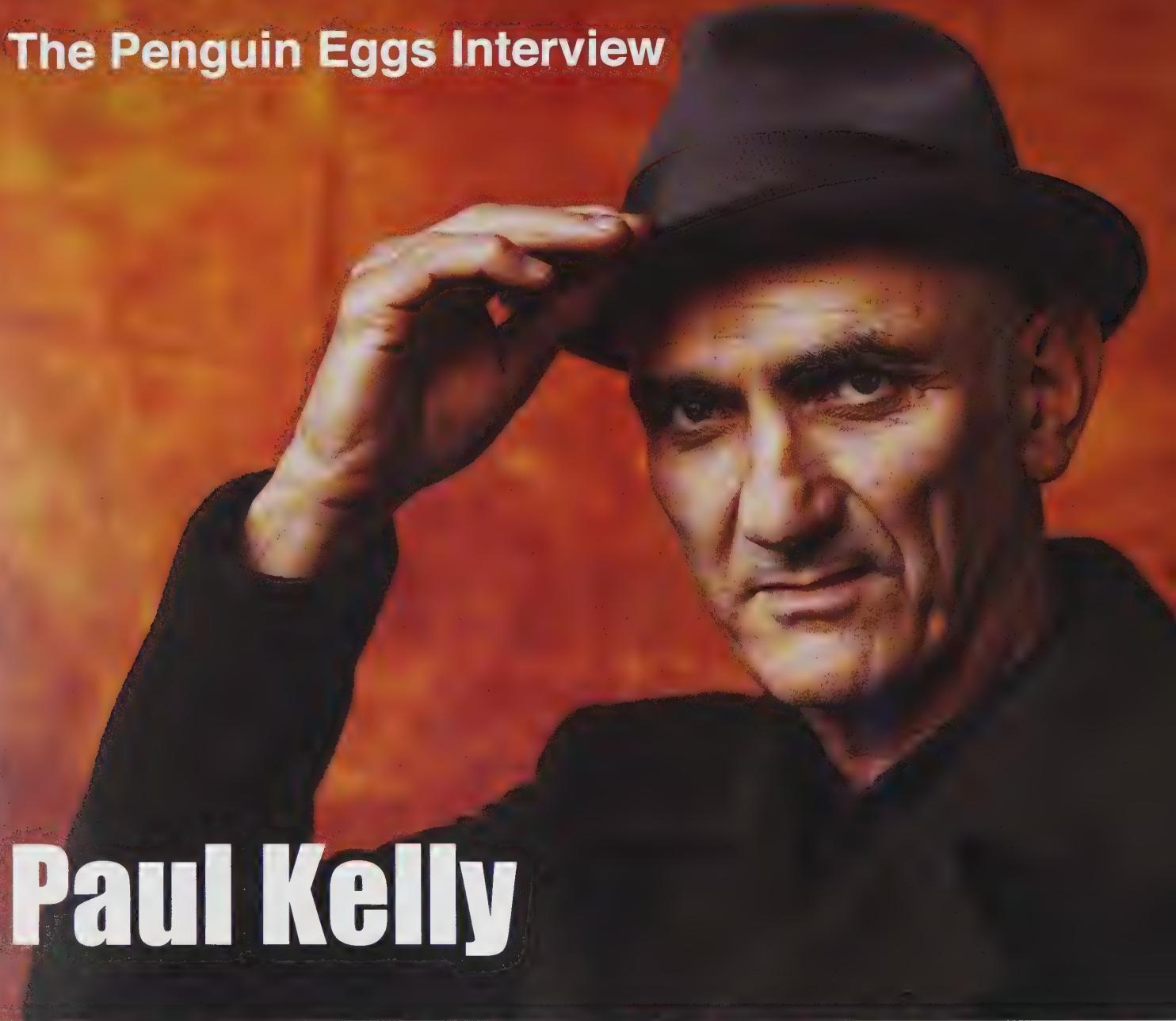


THE MASTERSONS – NO TIME FOR LOVE SONGS

“Sumptuous vocals and easy flowing melodies.” —AMERICAN SONGWRITER



The Penguin Eggs Interview



Paul Kelly

It seems fairly absurd that Paul Kelly doesn't fill football stadiums worldwide. One of the most consistently adventurous and literate songwriters on the planet throughout the past 35-odd years, he attracts a mere cult following outside of his native Australia wherein his iconic status is ironclad.

The diversity of his 25 sterling studio albums can rattle with the antics of ska or soar with the high lonesome intricacy of bluegrass yet still flirts with every imaginable genre in-between. No stranger to the national pop charts, his indomitable songs deal with such essential topics as Aboriginal land rights, the environment, and... erm...cricket, in equal measures of humour and pathos. His inspiration, he says, is scavenged from such unlikely and disparate sources as author Raymond Carver and playwright and poet William Shakespeare. Amongst his numerous projects, Kelly has championed and co-written with such celebrated Aboriginal songwriters as Archie Roach and Kerv Carmody, both familiar to Canadian folk festivals. Of late, though, Kelly has recorded several impressive albums of

international poetry set to music, both in a classical and folk setting.

Clearly not quite ready for a rocking chair, pipe, and slippers, Kelly has released five albums in the past three years, including *Life Is Fine* (2017), which gave him his first No. 1 in Australia. Most recently, he released in Canada the quite wonderful and updated *Paul Kelly's Greatest Hits: Songs From The South 1985-2019*.

Questions by **Roddy Campbell**.

You released *Songs From The South* in 1997 and *Songs From The South Volume II* in 2007 and now you've released the two together with the odd changes. What's the thinking behind that?

It's really to include songs from albums from the last 11 years. Two of them, *Life is Fine* and *Nature*, had a fair bit of commercial radio play so it was time for an update. It was just working out the extra songs to put in. And really, they chose themselves—the more popular songs.

What runs through your mind when you go back and listen to these songs, particularly the ones in your early career?

I don't listen to them very much. Obviously, some of the albums I play, and I shuffle them around so I stay in touch with a load of the old songs. Some of them don't stand the test of time. I try and do different shows so that I'm always given a chance to play a mix of songs. As far as *Songs From The South*, I didn't have to put a lot of work into that. That was really, as I said, an update from 2007.

You once described songwriting as: a scavenging art, a desperate act, a bit from here, a bit from there, fumbling around, never quite knowing what you're doing. Do you still feel that way?

Yeah, very much. It's always scrappy and random and chancey. I would still say the same thing. It is mysterious but you have to consciously make the time and start doing it. You shouldn't sit around waiting for inspiration. It usually starts happening when I make time for it, away from touring or recording; you don't answer the phone or go for a cup of coffee with a friend. I give myself what I call idle time. You'll always find an excuse for doing something else. Mostly, writing for me is being bored. It's fun but it's also boring because a lot of the time nothing happens and then suddenly something does, and you've got to try and hunt it down. Mostly, it's long periods of boring yourself because I'm a fairly limited musician. It's not like I get pleasure sitting with my instrument like some more fluent musician. I'm a good basic guitar player and I can plonk on a piano and pick out chords. Like all writers, I have habits and things I fall into. I'm always trying to find something new.

I've just finished reading the Paul Simon biography by Robert Hilburn. Lyrically, Simon takes a bit from here and there. Some bits are autobiographical, other parts are from his imagination. I take it that's how you work, too, on a song like *A Bastard Like Me*?

A Bastard Like Me is an exception because that is based on a true story. I do occasionally have songs that are based on what I call newspaper songs. They are based on true stories or real events. That one was all laid out in the story on the person it's based on—an Aboriginal activist called Charlie Perkins who wrote an autobiography in the early '70s called *A Bastard Like Me*. That's a great title for a song. Everything in that song, it has not a lot of detail, but it's based on Charlie Perkins's life.

The inspiration for *Everything's Turning to White*, I understand, came from a Raymond Carver novel. Is that typical, finding inspiration in such odd places?

Yeah. You can call that scavenging, too. That was from a short story called *So Much Water So Close To Home*. When I first came across Raymond Carver I just gulped him down. I read as much as I could of him. I came across him at a really good time when I was figuring out how to write songs. Looking back now, short stories, it's a form that is close to songwriting. You have to be concise. Even within that form, Raymond Carver took it to new levels of

sparseness. Sometimes there doesn't seem to be much going on but there's a lot happening around the edges. His stories seem to convey a lot of information without a lot of words. Another thing about his stories: they'd often end when something was about to happen. So there's always things before, around, and outside informing the story. I found that was a style which I could approach songs. They could be open ended. I like to suggest stories without spelling them out.

Raymond Carver was a big influence, I think, in my early songwriting. What was really weird, I wrote that song about five or six years after I read the story. I was driving across America with my young family. My wife was driving and I was in the back seat noodling on the guitar and that song just came out in a rush. I remember thinking, 'That's a lot like that Raymond Carver song—should go and check and see how close it is'. I thought I'd probably wandered off from the original story and mixed things up.

We got to Austin, Texas, and went to a bookstore and read that story standing there and I was amazed that every detail in the song was from the story. I hadn't embellished it at all. It must have somehow stuck in my head.

Do you still get the same thrill writing songs as you did when you were starting out?

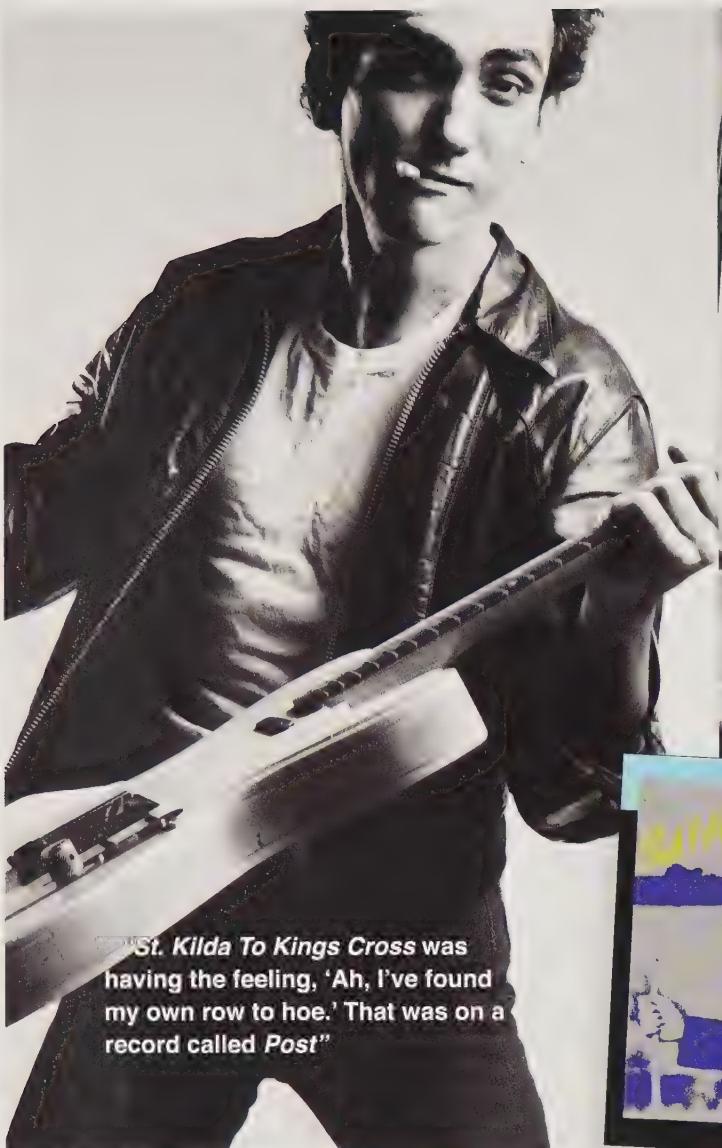
Oh, yeah. When you get a song, and it's a good one, it's exciting. That's the most exciting thing for me. Some songs you know straight away, 'I've got it. This is good.' Other ones you just abandon.

You once said you haven't got songwriting nailed yet. Is that still true after producing such a body of work?

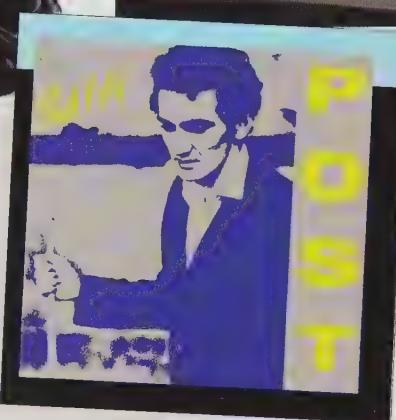
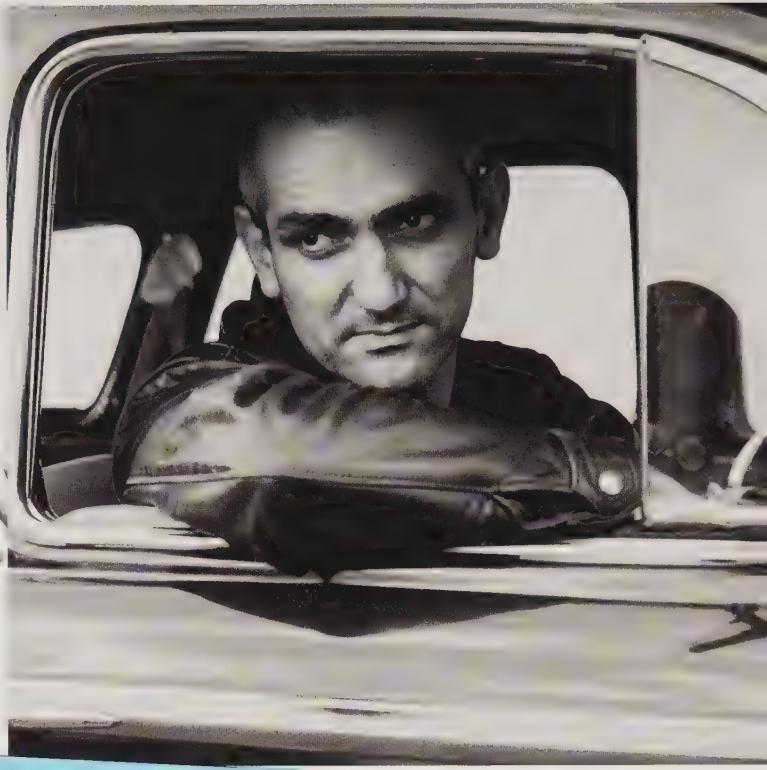
That's still true. That's the nature of songwriting for me. I've also written prose. I've written a memoir. I find writing prose much easier; it's like bricks and mortar. It's one sentence after another. That's all I think about when I write prose, just write one sentence and then write the next. You lay your bricks and then you get a wall, and then you get a room, and then you get a house. Writing prose for me is a lot more graspable and solid.

Whereas writing songs is much more like catching things from the air. Probably the best way to describe it, when I was writing a book I'd sit down at the start of the day and I could be pretty confident that at the end of the day I would have maybe 500 words. Writing a song, you've got to go to work. You've got to turn up. It's like fishing. Nothing might happen for two or three days and then you get a bite. So, you have to be there and turn up. I couldn't say I would have a song by the end of the day. But writing prose I could say I have a few hundred words, most probably.

People say songwriting is a craft. It's not a craft like a cobbler making a pair of shoes. There's a blueprint. There's the material. There's the skills. He goes to work at the start of the day and will have a pair of shoes made by the end of the day. You've got the songwriting skill, of course, but something else has to happen. Something else has to surprise you. You just can't follow a formula. Unless something unexpected happens, you are not going to get a good song.



***St. Kilda To Kings Cross* was having the feeling, ‘Ah, I’ve found my own row to hoe.’ That was on a record called *Post*”**



What songs from this collection would you say were turning points in your writing?

A very early one, *St. Kilda To Kings Cross*, was probably a turning point for me. I made a couple of albums before that which were a struggle and didn’t do very well. None of those songs stuck with me. On these early records I was still working on lots of things: how to be in a band, how to record, how to write songs. *St. Kilda To Kings Cross* was having the feeling, ‘Ah, I’ve found my own row to hoe.’ That was on a record called *Post*, which was just an acoustic record with me and Steve Connolly on guitars and Mike Barclay singing harmonies. It was fairly minimal record. That was a turning point for me. I was in my early 30s. I’d been trying to write songs and making music for 10, 11 years and I’d suddenly found something that was mine.

Where does *From Little Things Big Things Grow* sit in your judgment of your songs?

I’m often ambivalent about my songs. I thought it was a child-like melody. To me it’s like a creaky old buggy that keeps going down the road. It’s become a very popular song here. Again, it’s not one

of my usual songs because it’s based on a true story, based on indigenous landrights—one of the early events that was influential in the landrights movement. I sing it often enough.

But at times I’ve gotten sick of the song and thought it seems like a Sunday school song or something. But again, it was one of these songs that started with an image. There’s a very famous photograph, when the Gurindji people finally got their lands back. Gough Whitlam, the prime minister of Australia at the time, symbolized the giving back of the land, poured dirt into the hands of Vincent Lingiari the head of the Gurindji. That’s a famous photograph and the starting point for the song.

Has music the power to shape political debate?

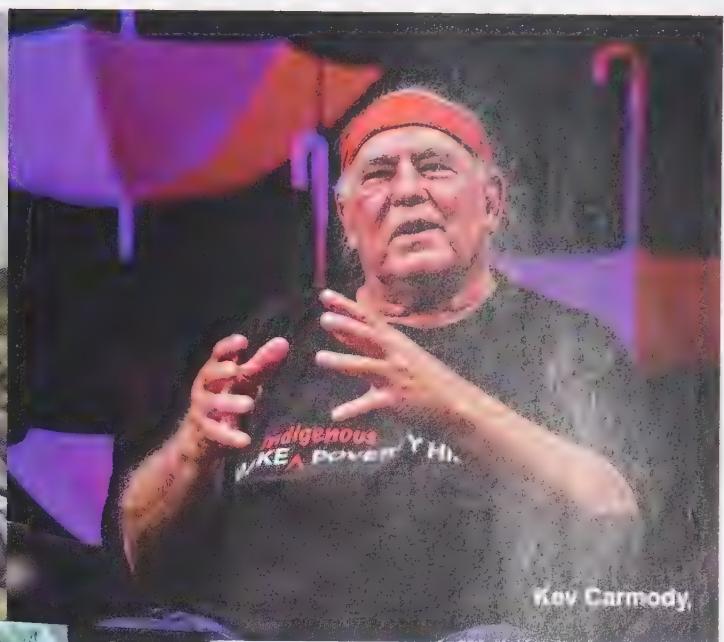
I think it does. In the same way, everything we do is political: how we act, what we buy, how we invest, how we treat other people, how we lobby, how we write letters to the editor, or MPs, or politicians, or how we go to demonstrations, or a rally. I think they all count. I can’t estimate what songs can do but I think they’re all part of a general push for change. They’re in the mix but I don’t think they’re all-powerful nor do I think they’re negligible.

You didn’t fancy getting into politics like Peter Garrett of *Midnight Oil*?

I know Peter Garrett. I really admire him. But I’m not that kind of songwriter. My songs come more accidentally with the caveat that there are specific songs like *From Little Things Big Things Grow* or



Archie Roach



Kev Carmody



Bastard Like Me or *Maralingi*, which is a song recounting the effects of British atomic testing on South Australian Aborigines. Those are more political songs I write occasionally but they are not really typical of the songs I write.

These terrible fires have been happening periodically for almost 10 years now. What do you see as the outcome of his summer's horrendous tragedies?

There's definitely a shift. I don't know how much you follow our politics but the Conservative Party is the liberals and the Labour Party is more like [American] Democrats. They've both been moving slowly on trying to address man-made climate change. Australia is a big exporter of coal. We rely on fossil fuels for our economy, so politicians have been reluctant to do much. Labour had tried to introduce a carbon tax. They tried to do more than the Conservatives but they got stymied and knocked back.

The Conservatives are the government right now with a fairly strong right wing. They think that climate change is a conspiracy, that it's not a problem. The fires have been bad for the last few years but this year they were huge; huge areas of the east coast of Australia was burning. But that seems to have shifted the debate. Even the Conservatives have acknowledged they have to reshape policy. They're all talk at the moment but once the fire season is over it'll be back to business as usual. But I feel there was a real shift this summer. There has to be a change to be effective.

You've worked with Kev Carmody and Archie Roach; both have been to Canada. How did you get involved with them?

I met Kev first in the late '80s. We played on a few bills together and we became friends. We wrote *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, in 1988 for the bicentenary of modern Australia. We were involved in songwriting for a one-hour film that came out in 2000 called *One Night The Moon*. We both wrote songs for that. He lives out in Western Queensland but we keep in touch by phone or I go

out and visit him. He has slowed down as far as performing because he's in a lot of physical pain. He's got pretty bad arthritis so he can't play guitar for long periods of time. He's a man with lots of great stories. He's got a great body of work apart from his songs—poems and stories and history of his part of the world.

Archie Roach and I met not long after I met Kev. I produced his first record and we've kept in touch. I'm more in touch with

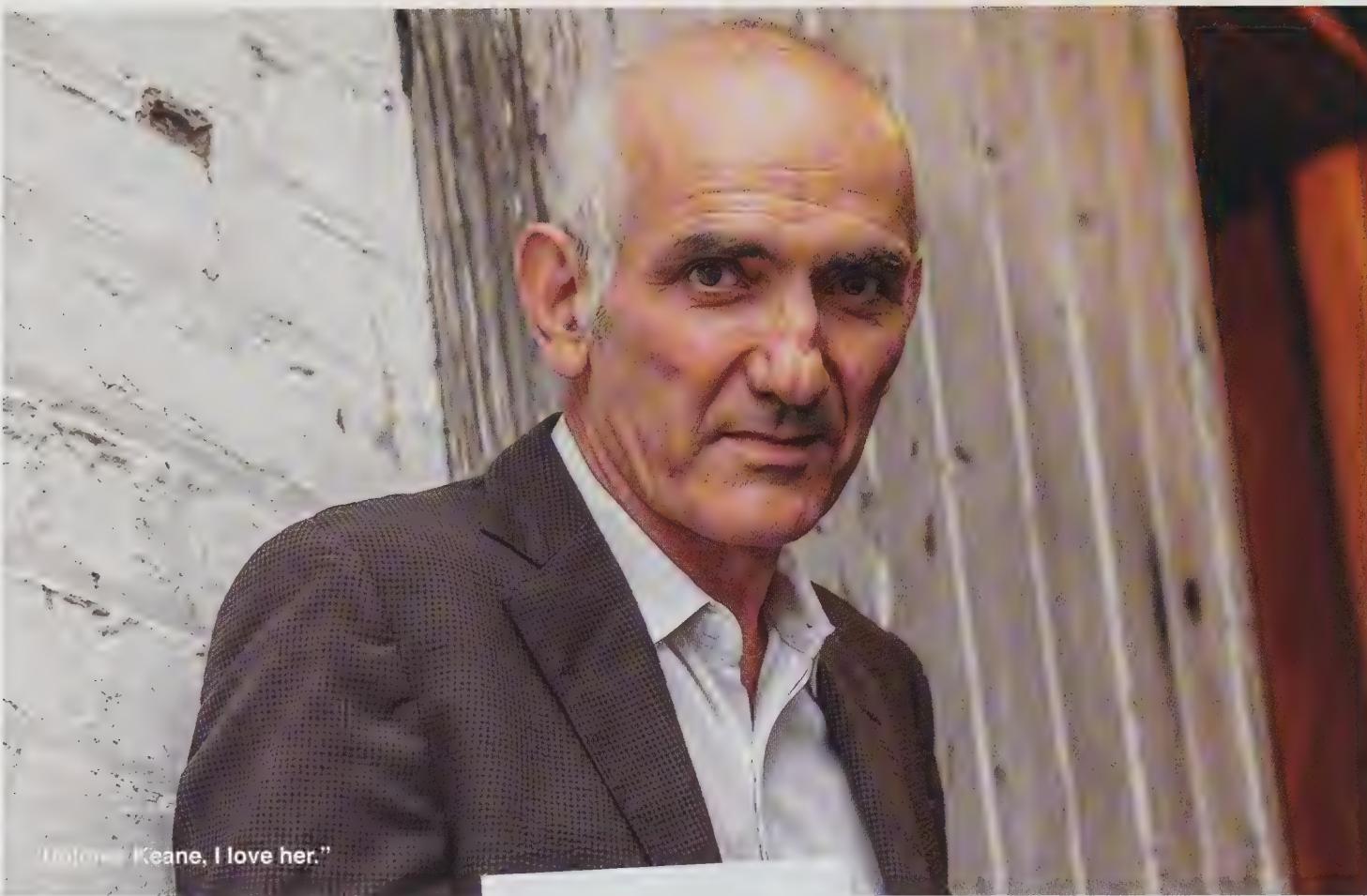
Kev than Archie. His first record, *Charcoal Lane*, came out in 1991. There was a fair bit of activity around the 25th anniversary of that record in 2016. I was involved in some shows with him then. And we co-wrote over the years, too, a record called *Into The Blood Stream*. We get together at different times to do different things.

The most recent one was when his autobiography came out last year called *Tell Me Why*. I really recommend *Tell Me Why*; it's well-written and it's an incredible story. To accompany that book, he did a series of recordings with a pianist called Paul Grabowsky and his band. Paul's a jazz pianist but he very sympathetically re-arranged and recorded a lot of Archie's songs from his whole career and they're both called *Tell Me Why*.

We had written *Rally Round The Drum* many years ago, which Archie had never recorded but I had. We did a duet of that song for this record based on Archie's days as a tent boxer at local fairs. Archie's not in the best of health either but he's been singing and performing quiet a bit for the last couple of years and it's really been good for him.

Do you listen much to traditional songs? I read somewhere that one of the first songs you ever played live was *The Streets of Forbes*.

Yes, I do. I started out playing in folk clubs. Folk songs were some of the first things I learned. Early on, Hank Williams. I don't think you would call Hank Williams traditional, but he is tied to old-time music. The Stanley Brothers, Planxty, Paul Brady and



Dolores Keane, I love her.”

Andy Irvine—*Arthur McBride*, that was a big one for me. Dolores Keane, I love her. Christie Moore. I love these records of traditional Irish music.

I learned a fair bit of those songs early on, too. One of the things that was a thrill for me was getting Paul Brady to tour Australia for the first time. He'd never been here, and he'd not played *Arthur McBride* for years, too. I got him playing *Arthur McBride*. It was one of those songs that he got sick to death of. We did a duet on it on a tour of Australia. That was a great thrill.

You've covered such a wide swath of musical styles, from bluegrass to ska. How do you decide what accompaniment a song needs?

It's vague, like a hunch. I sometimes play songs different from the way I first recorded. Some songs are more flexible than others. I did two bluegrass albums. Half of the songs were new ones and the other half were songs of mine done that way. As I said, I came up playing old-time music and folk music; it's the DNA of a lot of my songs. A lot of my songs came through bluegrass

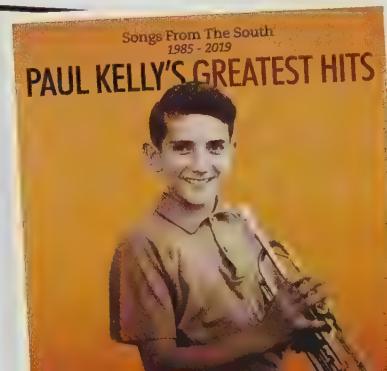
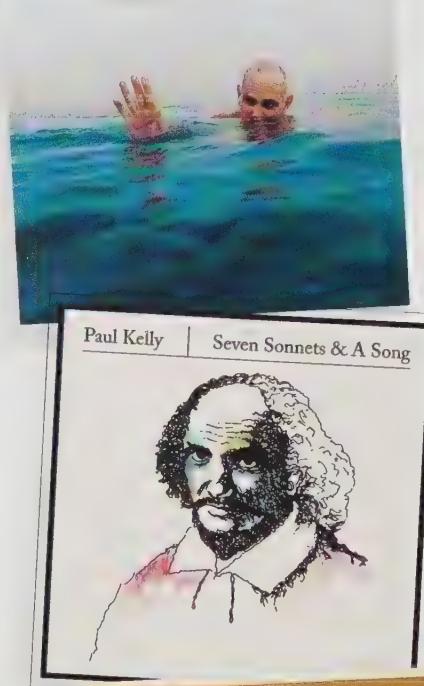
or the folk format. Any of my songs I can play on my own with a guitar, which means they can change shape with different players and different bands

I take it from the back photo on the sleeve that you have an affinity for cricket: is that what inspired *Bradman*?

I love test cricket. Cricket's changed a lot over the last 30 years. Actually, I've written three cricket songs, which I think is rather excessive. I wrote about *Bradman*, *Behind the Bowler's Arm*, and I wrote about Shane Warne, a very famous modern cricketer. I still watch test cricket that's a five-day event. Other forms of cricket not so much.

You've been setting poems to music in the last few years, *Seven Sonnets* and *Thirteen Ways To Look At Birds* being the most obvious examples. What brought this about?

The first time I put poems to music was a record called *Conversations With Ghosts*. It was a show I did in 2012.



I was asked to work with the classical composer James Ledger, who wrote a song cycle for a student orchestra called ANAM: the Australian National Academy of Music. This request came just after I wrote my memoir, which had taken me a few years. During that period of time I had hardly written a song. I thought it was interesting and scary, which was a good reason to say yes. Having not written a song for awhile, I was feeling very rusty as a songwriter. I thought I'd see if I could find some poems which Jim could put music to that. That was what we did. And that became a recording, *Conversations With Ghosts*.

Before that, I had this idea in my head that you couldn't start with the words and create a song. The way I always had written songs was starting out with chords and a tune and maybe a time, or a few words, or a sound. The music was always first for me. I would sing into a cassette tape recorder. And I still use that method except now I sing into my phone.

Most of my songs start with me singing the tune and with some sounds and words attached. Finishing a song for me was getting the words to fit the sounds or the tune. If you start with the words first it's going to restrict the music or make it too rigid, or whatever.

This project was like turning a key: 'It does work. I can start with the words first and the music can go anywhere.' With *Conversations With Ghosts* we were putting free-verse to music, there were melodies in there, and half-talked, and half-melodies, and some of them turned out just like songs. After that I went, 'Oh well, I can always take a poem and make it into a tune.'

The first one I did after that project was Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18*. One day I thought, 'I wonder if I can make a tune out of this?' And it sounded like a bluegrass or a folk tune, which perfectly fits the language of Shakespeare. Folk music often has an archaic or poetic turn of phrase in the old songs so there wasn't a big jump for me between putting Shakespeare to music and making a folk song out of it.

Once I did one I thought I'd try and do a few more. So that led on to the *Sonnets* record. It's been part of my songwriting ever since. My record, *Nature*, there are poems by five other people but it's not an art record. They sit in with my songs.

It's rather exciting after 40 years of writing to suddenly find a new way to write songs. That's what every writer, I guess, is looking for. Breaking old habits. Find new ways to write songs. So that's another way I've got to write songs apart from my mumbling into a tape recorder.

You've been really busy of late with five albums in three years. What brought about that spurt of creativity?

Maybe it's because I've been writing music using other people's words. *Nature*, for example, I had only to write five songs. When I do put other people's words to music, it either happens quickly or not at all. It doesn't take as long as when I write my own songs. I put out a record last year which was called *Thirteen Ways To Look At Birds*, which was a classical collaboration. *Thirteen Ways To Look At Birds*, was suggested by Anna Goldsworthy, the pianist. James Ledger and I were getting back together to work again. It seems I'm being prolific but I'm being helped along by the work of the poets themselves and working with other people. I often re-

spond to interesting ideas. I don't have another job. I'm just happy to be lying on the couch reading all day. Some days I might even get a new song.

You've toured with two songwriting masters: Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan. What was that experience like?

They were both great in completely different ways. I played shows with Bob in 2001 and a couple more a few years later. Bob was more spontaneous in his shows, more off the cuff, changing up his songs more. Leonard was very much the opposite. The was considered, every detail worked out. We did 10 shows with Leonard 12 years ago now. And I saw quite a lot of those shows. They were all the same, the same song order. He said the same things between songs, he told the same jokes, never once ~~drove~~ tired, or contrived, or cynical in any way. It was ritualistic; it was like prayer. I've never seen so much love coming from an artist to a performer.

Also, the response from him, he served it back to them like a priest or a rabbi. The love coming off him, he somehow poured it back to the audience. Everything about the attention to detail, the ritualistic measure of the show, everything the same, was very vaudevillian.

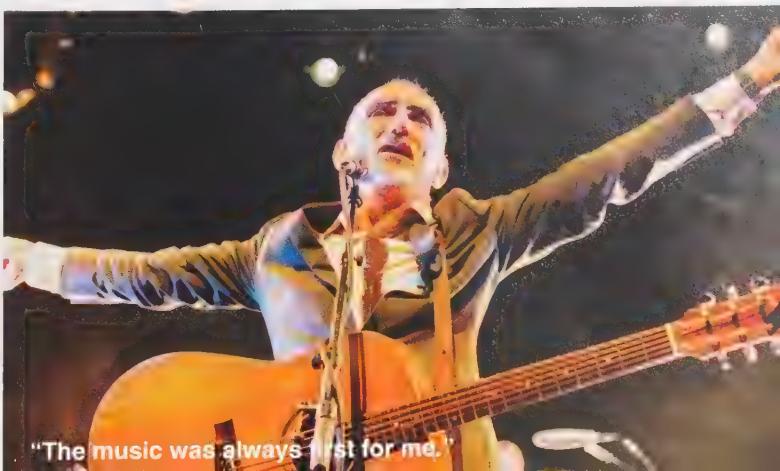
There was so much that went into the show. There was no rock guitars, no distortion, nothing loud. The band played really quiet and really clean. And the rich power and timbre of his voice, they made space for it to slip in. To me that was like a masterclass in performing. I watched that show over and over again and never thought it was anything stale or trite. It was beautiful.

How did you feel when *Life Is Fine* became your first No. 1 album in 2017?

Yeah. That was all right [he laughs]. Putting out records is very collaborative with the record label. We did the work doing promo, and we did our shows, and we got good radio play on a couple of the songs, so that's what helped. It's a bonus; it's not something I'm aiming for. That's not why I make records, 'Oh, it's No 1, oh, great.' It's a real morale booster. So it's one for the team.

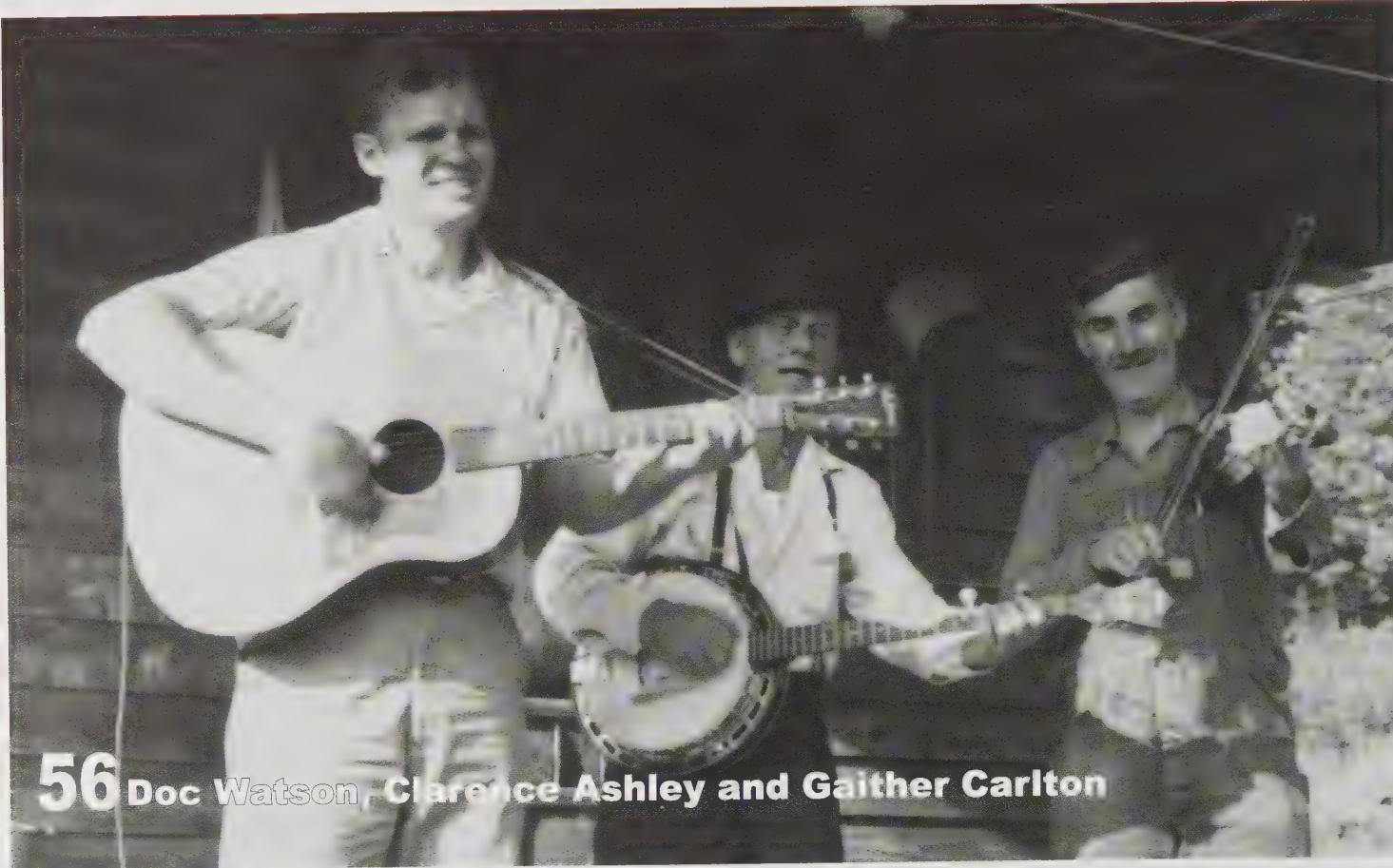
How would you like to be remembered?

I don't know how to answer a question like that.



"The music was always first for me."

Reviews



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100 Mile House

100 Mile House

Love and Leave You (Fallen Tree Records)

Edmonton's 100 Mile House have created a warm, intimate folk album that illuminates a new stage in the lives of duo Peter Stone and Denise MacKay.

As the two have matured and gone from two individuals to a family, so has their music gone through a transition. Observances both personal and universal are peppered through these songs: how relationships change, losing loved ones along the way, and how things evolve as the years pass.

Produced by Peter Stone, the instrumentation on *Love and Leave You* is stripped down but rich in all the right places to accompany the laying bare of themselves within the lyrics.

Beautiful harmonies highlight these story songs that lay bare some intimate and emotional moments in the making of a family, and the ebbs and flows that we all face in life.

Grateful is a simultaneously uplifting and melancholy taking stock of what we have to be thankful for in life, while *Worth the Wait* chronicles the struggles and joys of becoming parents. A truly honest and intimate snapshot in song.

— By Tanya Corbin

Martin Harley

Roll With The Punches (Del Mundo Records)



Admittedly, it takes something special to inject new life into an overworked genre.

Britain's Martin Harley has it, lifting the acoustic blues roots category by taking it to church.

With five solo records under his belt, the Surrey-based, Welsh-born Harley began with the contemporary blues band approach back in '03. He's since been heavily influenced by life in Nashville, plying his slide, lap guitar skills into something more akin to Americana.

No matter what you want to call it, Harley has rejuvenated his sound with the help of Harry Harding (drums, bass, backing vocals, additional guitars), Johnny Henderson (Hammond B3, Wurlitzer, piano), Rex Horan (bass), and Jodie Marie (backing vocals) as Harley concentrates on electric bottleneck.

Recorded—analogue—in a Welsh country chapel, the result is a sweet sound that makes the most of Harley's strong voice, bolstering each track with backup vocals (Harding/Marie). His guitar sound is key to each composition and he fluctuates

between Landreth-style slide (the title track) and fast or slow, rock-based moments.

Of special note is the quality of these 10 self-penned compositions. Aside from the impressive opener, *Brother* features animated slide against a rich backdrop of B3 and backup vocals; a lovely track.

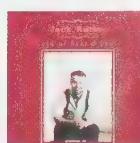
Likewise, *If Tears Were Pennies* offers a guitar-driven, near-boogie that breaks into a full-band breakdown, hinting at their live potential.

Elements of both country (*I'd Rather Be Lucky Than Rich*) and rockabilly-come-gospel (*The Time Is Now*) are present, yet it's head-turners such as *Clarbeston Resonation* (a Cooder-esque solo that never quite breaks into song—but sounds great) the rollicking, honky-tonkin' *Shanghai*, with its funky piano breaks and full chorus, and the jaw-droppingly beautiful *Margeurite* suggest Harley's no one-trick pony. There's lots to love here.

— By Eric Thom

Jack Rutter

Gold of Scar and Shale (Independent)



Jack Rutter is better known as part of the U.K. folk trio Moore, Moss, Rutter.

Here on his second solo outing he sings songs set in the countryside of his native Yorkshire and other parts of Northern



Britain.

The material is mainly traditional, which he has arranged in fresh and imaginative ways. The rarely heard Child ballad *Fair Janet And Young James* incorporates a melody borrowed from June Tabor, and is sung with suitable passion against sparse guitar and fiddle accompaniment.

The Brundeanlaws is a bothy ballad of illicit love in the farmlands of Scotland's border country, which is carried wonderfully by Sam Sweeney's jaunty fiddle and Rutter's witty singing. *The Sledmere Poachers* tells of the dangers of that line of trade—especially for the poacher's dog.

Rutter's clear and rich tenor voice is the perfect instrument for expressing these folk songs, most notably on *When Jones's Ale Was New* where he hits even

the highest notes with strength and accuracy. Highly recommended.

— By Tim Readman

Lynn Harrison

Something More (*Independent*)



In Lynn Harrison's world, life has its struggles and suffering, but dig deep and you'll find hope. Harrison's songwriting comes from a place of non-denominational spirituality. A Unitarian minister in her day job in Toronto, she doesn't claim to provide easy answers in her songwriting, but as the title song says, she has an idea that there is "something more."

Hearing this kind of non-preachy spirituality is refreshing, uplifting even for the most hard-nosed atheist. I think John Lennon would approve of her

thought that, "Just pray love will see us through, it's all I can do when I can't pretty it up."

In this wonderfully melodic album, Harrison acknowledges there are more questions than answers to the mysteries of life and all of its contradictions. She writes: "I don't know how it works, will someone please explain, how there can be so much beauty in the midst of so much pain?" Good question.

There's even a protest song, which a wild guess would say was inspired by Donald Trump: "Until I found what you did sir, I was not a protester."

Kudos have to go to the production team of Noah Zacharin and Douglas September, who have brought out the beauty of the songs, especially Zacharin's tasty electric guitar, which provides an abundance of texture.

— By Mike Sadava

Tinsley Ellis

Ice Cream In Hell (*Alligator Records*)



If this is Hell, please take me there. Eighteen albums later, Tinsley Ellis is best-known amongst too small a circle of blues-rock guitar aficionados—you know the kind.

Yet his skills have multiplied exponentially—his songwriting, guitar playing, and singing voice proving a triple threat—no less so than on his latest 11-song opus. And, if you do nothing else today, just order this disc for the sheer joy of listening in awe to the seven-plus-minute *Your Love's Like Heroin*. As flawless as it is satisfying on so many levels—even though it ends far too soon.

Co-producer and keyboard whiz Kevin McKendree is proof they are twin sons of different

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mothers—an integral component of Ellis's impeccable sound and a brilliant organist/pianist in his own right. Together, with Steve Mackey (bass) and Lynn Williams (drums), no fire marshall will ever sleep again.

Despite the temptation, you can turn a game of Spot Ellis's Influences into an all-night contest. From the Buchanan-esque taste on *Your Love's Like Heroin* to the hint o' Albert King on *Last One To Know* (complete with horns), you'll quickly come to realize that Ellis streams them all—telepathically—into an arsenal of his own making, straining them each through his Georgian filter.

From the quirky *Don't Know Beans*, with its oddly addictive key changes and ultra-clean guitar lines, to the grand slam of *Hole In My Heart*, there's nothing here that wouldn't lead off any playlist.

Of special note on *Ice Cream* is the improvement of Ellis's vocals throughout. He used to shine brightest on slower numbers; you can sense the pain and feel the sting in his voice on *Hole In My Heart*. Yet on faster numbers like *Sit Tight Mama*, his vocals are right where they're supposed to be.

From the hardline, blues-rock burn of *No Stroll In The Park*, set against more lush B3 and the pinpoint precision of his rhythm section to the ringing tone Ellis squeezes from his guitar on *Evil Till Sunrise*, this is a new master to contend with.

All originals, Ellis's songwriting is smart, lyrically tight, offering fresh insight into tired themes while the sound on this disc is exquisitely clear and pristine without being antisep-tic. To appreciate that Ellis is doing exactly what he loves to do comes through in every mix. The sky's his limit.

—By Eric Thom



B.A.R.K: Colin Linden, Tom Wilson, & Stephen Fearing

Blackie & The Rodeo Kings

King Of This Town (Warner Music)



Funny how time breezes along.

One day a trio of troubadours gets together for a one-off tribute to their mutual friend, the much-admired late Willie P. Bennett. Stephen Fearing, Colin Linden, and Tom Wilson find that the group effort brings something unexpected out of them, and people want to hear that. And suddenly Blackie & The Rodeo Kings are heading into their 25th year, with the first-ever backing of a major label behind them.

After drafting in some choice guest artists on their *Queens and Kings* albums of recent years, BARK has re-grouped here to consider the basic ingredients again, augmented by most of their original rhythm section, Gary Craig and John Dymond. Maybe because it happened at Linden's new Nashville studio, or just because it was time, they continue to find new wrinkles in this set of

11 new songs sporting a versatile group identity even when tracks lean towards one singer/lyricist or another.

After the spacey economy of *Hard Road*, these roots-rock explorers start heading down the highway with *Cold 100* and *Trust Yourself* slides in to solidify the momentum. Wilson's quietly slinky *Baby I'm Your Devil* is irresistible before the exuberant licks of *Kick My Heart Around* hit a celebratory peak. Two moving ballads, *Walking On Our Own Graves* and *Grace*, allow Fearing to balance the essential contrast of

dark to light.

In the end, Hawksley Workman, The McCrary Sisters, and Wilson's son Tom are worked into the mix, but it's the Kings' town again and you'll want to visit.

— By Roger Levesque

Jessica Heine

Goodbye Party (Fallen Tree R)



Those songs. That voice. Where did she come from? Who is she? Why isn't she famous?

She comes from Edmonton. *Goodbye Party* is her first record in 10 years and it's a real gem, one born of heartache. Jessica has a degree in classical vocal performance but her passion is folk music and songwriting and, indeed, this record is soulful, sweet, and full of passion.

Heine was inspired to write this album after her bitter divorce—some heart-breaking songs, some hopeful, all memorable. It's an intensely personal record born of introspection, taking stock and moving



Jessica Heine

forward; songs that look back at what went wrong, about mending wounds.

I'm sorry she had to go through all the pain but I'm thankful she had the grace and talent to turn her unfortunate circumstances into such lovely music. There are songs that feel fragile, such as *Figure It Out*, and angry (*When You Love Me*) and defiant, such as *Goodbye Party*.

Producer Peter Stone, of Edmonton's 100 Mile House, helped make sure the arrangements serve as perfectly tasteful backdrops for the lyrics. They're extremely sparse when appropriate, such as the gentle strumming behind the vocal on *Be Gentle With My Heart*, which, at two minutes, is a tiny treasure of a song.

Heine's crystal-clear voice shines through in every song.

I highly recommend pouring a glass of wine and listening to this record from beginning to end. A box of tissue may come in handy but I promise you'll be smiling through the tears.

— By Eric Rosenbaum

Si Kahn

Best of the Rest (Strictly Country Records)



Since the early 1960s, Si Kahn has succeeded in a fully involved life as a folksinger, a community activist, and writing songs that have become standards, such as *Aragon Mill*, and being an important part of America's conscience.

Last year in his 75th year, his record company of more than a quarter century released a five-CD box set in celebration—*Si Kahn at 75 – the Europe Sessions*. And on the heels of that

release comes a concentrated version called *Best of the Rest*, 20 songs distilled by Si himself from the five CDs.

This collection features a poignant love song to his wife, a look back at his early activist days as a member of SNCC in the 1960s, a musing about Strom Thurmond getting pregnant, and a touching ballad of behind the *Curtain's of Old Joe's House*.

What can I say—if you have never experienced Si Kahn, please indulge. It's a great collection. If you do have an appreciation of Si and his work, this collection just reminds yet again there is very good reason Si Kahn still is relevant and also still very entertaining.

If you possibly can, catch him this year at the Vancouver Folk Festival in July.

— By les siemieniuk

Matt Patershuk

If Wishes Were Horses (Black Hen Music)



If Wishes Were Horses is country/folk with a nice helping of rock and blues.

Patershuk calls it a mixed bag and, indeed, he displays a range of musical influences, although country really is at its heart.

I don't know about you but when there's a song on a record called *Ernest Tubb Had Fuzzy Slippers* that's the one you go for first. Here, Patershuk recounts the true story of the night the drunken country singer Tubb had a run-in with Nashville producer Jim Denny. The Opry pioneer took a shot at Denny with a .357 magnum. Spoiler alert: he missed.

Patershuk's humour and straightforward storytelling reads like a scene from a movie

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with Nashville veteran Charlie McCoy on harmonica and album producer and guitar slinger Steve Dawson contributing the fitting soundtrack.

Patershuk isn't from Nashville, he's from Alberta, which is reflected in recurring images of working men, country bars, and horses, of course.

A standout track on this North Americana collection is *Alberta Waltz*, a melancholy affair, a final turn on the dance floor at closing time: "Dancing's for dreamers and lovers and fools. And it's hard to be a dreamer when you just set down your tools."

There are also a few surprises, including a cover of Jerry Garcia's *Sugaree* and four short instrumentals, all variation of the same melody, adding to the cinematic nature of the album.

This is producer Dawson's fourth collaboration with Patershuk. His gritty, rootsy production proves to be a strong foundation for Patershuk's soulful lyrics and husky, whisky voice.

— By Eric Rosenbaum

Frazey Ford

U Kin B the Sun (Arts and Crafts)



The eagerly awaited follow-up to 2015's *Indian Ocean* is full of seeming contradictions.

Serious topics play out in Ford's ethereal, and sometimes illegible, vocal style that still manages to convey the meaning and weight of the subject matter. Political messages come wrapped in slinky R&B grooves, most notably in the anthem *The Kids Are Having None Of It*, inspired by the Parkland school shooting survivors ("They can't be bought / they can't be taught your hate").



Ford's airy and pretty voice sings out *Motherfucker* in a way that makes you look twice to truly grasp the relationship-on-the-rocks tone of the song. The warmth of the music seems to shelter themes of resignation and anger.

A bit more bare bones than her previous album, *U Kin B the Sun* delivers a record that fans will feel is well worth the almost six-year wait. This collection gives a clearer window into Frazey Ford herself.

Opening track *Azad* tells the tale of her time on a Canadian commune with her draft dodger parents, and several breakup songs convey an edgy anger and resignation that have come out of what she calls "a time of transition".

Born out of a spontaneous collaboration with her longtime bassist Darren Parris and drummer Leon Power, this album is much more organic and improvisational, yet still feels finished and complete. Fun, summery soul with the contagious touch of disco danceability, this will be another soundtrack of the summer.

— By Tanya Corbin

Brighde Chaimbeul

The Reeling (River Lea Recordings)



THE REELING

From the opening tones of the first track, *O Chiadain An Lo*, you know you're in for something special. The gothic, haunting sound of the small pipes—together with the reedy harmonium in East Church, Cromarty, where *The Reeling* was recorded—burrow deep into the marrow of your bones and compel you to pay attention to this beautiful, sometimes sinister, and often-haunting music.

Brighde Chaimbeul is a

20-year-old Gaelic speaker from the Scottish Inner Hebridean Isle of Skye. When she was 17, Chaimbeul won the Radio 2 Young Folk Award and led the Highland Military Tattoo at 17. Since then, she's travelled and explored pipe music from many places, playing with pipers across eastern Europe, in Cape Breton, and in Ireland, as well as discovering rare tunes from Hebrides and Highlands.

The tunes on *The Reeling* are Scottish and Bulgarian (from the kaba gaida tradition) and show the similarities between the two musical traditions. The album features 82-year-old



Brighde Chaimbeul



Kate Rusby

singer and piper Rona Lightfoot, Chaimbeul's first teacher, who sings canntaireachd (a type of singing which mimics the pipes and is used to teach tunes) on several tracks.

This wonderful recording was produced by Lau's Aidan O'Rourke and he has perfectly preserved the real sound of the pipes with all the breathiness and creaking included. Raw, atmospheric, visceral music that challenges the listener, gets under your skin, and stays there!

— By Tim Readman

Kate Rusby

Philosophers, Poets and Kings (Pure Records)



I could listen to Kate Rusby's rich, gentle voice, tinged with her Yorkshire accent, for many hours. There's something about that voice, that she's singing for me, only for me.

Fantasies aside, Rusby is at the height of her art, melding traditional English songs—written by her as well as

anon—with modern musical sensibilities.

Her tales hearkening back to the old English countryside, the horse driver who falls for the fairest local girl, a squire and a parson so drunk that they think they are fighting a highwayman when they are just beating each other up. And a "toast to the farmer" may seem a little out of place in these days of Brexit, Megxit, Boris, austerity budgets and the like. But they comprise a tradition worth keeping, if only as an antidote to the current ennui.

There's a sense of hope running through this album, even on the stunningly beautiful *Halt the Wagons*, which commemorates the Huskar Pit mining disaster, which killed 26 children 180 years ago. Partly recorded underground at the National Coal Mining Museum with a children's choir, she sings that she will dry up her tears "and call up the wagons so the next shift can start."

Rusby pays homage to one of the heroes of modern English

traditional music—Richard Thompson—performing *Crazy Michael*, a song he played with Fairport Convention a half-century ago.

The disc is lovingly produced by Rusby's husband, Damien O'Kane, whose guitar is all over the album. The duet he sings with Rusby on her modern-day lullaby, *Until Morning*, is a highlight.

— By Mike Sadava

Shelley Posen

Ontario Moon (Independent)



Blessed with a clear, clean voice, Posen chooses to stop time in a conscious effort to evoke the sounds 'of another era', regardless of genre selected.

These 12 originals come across like some random '50s Radio Hour, featuring hand-picked artists to embellish each hand-crafted tune. Having made a name for himself as one-third of Ottawa's Finest Kind—a spellbinding, now-retired, vocal

trio with a gift for crafting history to song with rich vocal arrangements—this is Posen, solo.

His songwriting gifts are obvious and, while his deep baritone voice takes some time to warm to, the musical backdrop for each song proves bewitching. Christian Flores's Gypsy jazz guitar joins with Martin van de Ven's clarinet, conjuring an old-world night on a moonlit bay for the title track.

Espousing the innocent age of another era, *Emily* flaunts Posen's skills with a lyric—a romantic paean to a special woman, set to Mark Ferguson's piano and Scott Latham's swing-bent percussion.

The Best Song Ever Written is true tongue-in-cheek with a country bent, driven by Frank Koller's guitar, Michael Ball's fiddle, and Brian Ostrom's pedal steel.

Sugar Bush Breakfast, an upbeat duet with the perky Linda Morrison, serves up the pure, old-timey folk our parents listened to (cue The Weavers).

But the album's best track is *Night Nurse*, built on the back of Michael Jerome Browne's blues-soaked, bottleneck guitar as he and Posen (with his strongest vocal) turn a real life/death experience into a variation on



Shelley Posen

St. James Infirmary. Another jewel is *So Love, Goodbye*, a bittersweet farewell that makes the very best of a bad situation. A one-of-a-kind act and a true entertainer.

— By Eric Thom

Ímar

Avalanche (Big Mann Records)



This is Ímar's second album of pan-Celtic (Scottish, Manx, and Irish) traditional and original music. Their talisman is still Mohsen Amini, with his mercurial concertina playing and energetic performing style at the forefront much of the time.

Adam Brown's thunderous bodhrán and nimble guitar playing keeps things moving, along with Adam Rhodes's rhythmic bouzouki and the twin melodic frontline of Tomás Callister on fiddle and Ryan Murphy on pipes, whistle, and flute provides the finishing touches. Donald Shaw has been drafted in to play electric piano and provide string arrangements performed by Greg Lawson and Fiona Stephen (violins), Rhoslyn Lawton (viola), and Sonia Cromarty (cello).

The opening set, *Deep Blue*, sets the tone for the album



as it flies out of the gate and switches from tune to tune with agility. It's not all fast and furious stuff though, as evidenced by the gentle and melodic *White Strand* and the elegiac *Afar*. This is an accomplished recording from a deeply talented band.

— By Tim Readman

Doug MacArthur

The Horses of the Sea (Independent)



Doug MacArthur has been living by music in this country for a long time.

He plays. He sings. He writes songs. He starts music festivals and works at cultural institutions all over the country, from Fernie, BC, to Pefferlaw, ON, via Roy Thompson Hall. He runs a studio and video produc-

tion house in Quebec.

Doug MacArthur has sewn together a full and productive life across the last 40 years. The thread that binds it all together and makes sense of it has always been the songwriting. He's good at it. (Check out the people who have recorded his works).

So it's not surprising that after a lot of recent travel to Ireland, Doug has amassed a collection of songs inspired by his travels and as his website says first off, "This is not a collection of Irish songs, but a collection of songs ABOUT Ireland".

And a terrific set of songs it is, delivered with panache and emotion. Songs of ancient kings and not so ancient conflicts. But rather than me going on about it, in this age of amazing

technology *Horses of the Sea* is available for free download here (<https://www.dougmact.com/the-horses-of-the-sea>). Check it out for yourselves—you'll be glad you did. Doug will take you along on a most enjoyable journey.

— By les siemieniuk

Jake La Botz

They're Coming for Me (Free Dirt Records)



I did not know Jake La Botz until the editor sent me this latest offering for my edification. I learned Botz is from Chicago, born just over 50 years ago, a film actor (he was in *Rambo*, among others) and a TV actor (he was in *True Detective*, among others).

But more important—to the



Doug MacArthur



Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton

matter at hand—he also sings and plays guitar. Quite well, as it happens.

And he's no slouch at writing a pretty good song. The opening bluesy, rootsy, paranoia-flavoured title track, *They're Coming For Me*, is a pleasure to listen to. And *Nashville, Nashville* is a pretty good telling of the musician's lot.

"You're a musician, well, tell me what do you play / What kind of job do you in the day? / Used to play some, had to grow up / Found a job that pays – I wish you good luck."

One of the standout pieces of writing in this collection is *Bank Robber's Lament*, a chillingly and poignantly told tale of a botched bank robbery, which starts:

"Found a nail in the road today / And I thought about Jesus, 'bout Jesus / Picked it up and put it away / And I thought about Jesus, 'bout Jesus / It would be such a shame / To catch a flat tire out here in the rain."

And, oh yeah, Jake has also

been teaching somatic meditation for years. So Jake La Botz is seemingly a jack-of-all-trades and, judging by this collection, he is master of some.

— By les siemieniuk

Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton

Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton
(Smithsonian Folkways)



While there have been other recordings that document Doc Watson's early years as a performing musician, they tend to shine a light more directly on him as a performer.

This recording, *Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton*, distinguishes itself in some key ways. It's earlier, for one—it's Watson's first trip north—drawing from two concerts in Greenwich Village in October 1962. It's also notably natural; they aren't working up an act but rather just playing the songs they knew, just as they would play them at home in the front room.

There aren't any lost gems,

though the arrangements offer a unique view of how Watson was developing the material. Some tunes, as with the arrangement of *Bonaparte's Retreat*, aren't yet fully formed. It's short, paced a bit slower than we know, but it's there.

Watson plays banjo for about half of the tunes, including a beautiful duet on *Willie Moore* with Carlton on fiddle. It's a standout for its precision as well as for what Bill Monroe called the "ancient tones". The drone of the fiddle, the story of the murder, make it like listening through a keyhole to 19th century rural Appalachia.

Blue Ridge Mountain Blues demonstrates the contrast between arranging for banjo and fiddle and arranging for guitar and fiddle. It's an example of what Watson would become known for, with all the bass runs, fills, and inversions that really give life to a song.

Same, too, with *Billy in the Lowground*. A notable absence are the fast lead lines that, in time, would influence entire

generations of guitarists.

Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton is a rare window into an important moment in Watson's development. He's young, relaxed, playing for a joyful audience of strangers who love what he has to give. We're lucky to be able to hear it.

— By Glen Herbert

John Campbell Munro

The Kelly Collection (Greentrax Recordings)



My friend John Munro died in May 2018, ending a stellar 50-year

run of somehow making all the music he played as good as that music could possibly be.

He was Eric Bogle's collaborator for most of that time as well as a few other bands. Although he was the most amazing and consummate sideman and seemingly most happy standing besides other great musicians, he also was a terrific songwriter.

He loved the history of his adopted Australia and in 1990 he finished *The Eureka Suite*, a cycle of songs about a seminal moment in Aussie lore—the rebellion of the gold miners at Ballarat. It was recorded and



John Campbell Munro

presented all over Australia.

He then turned his attention to Ned Kelly, another historical story burned into the collective Australian psyche. For a myriad of reasons, *The Kelly Collection* songs were performed but never fully recorded.

So Eric and a lot of musicians John had worked with got together and finished it, using tracks John had recorded so he appears on it front and centre. What they did has given a great keepsake to the world of the talent of John Campbell Munro.

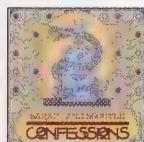
Having known John for so long, I cannot even pretend to be objective and review the finished product. But as the musicians John touched gathered to honour his memory by finishing this moving work, I will do my part for his musical legacy by urging you track it down and experience *The Kelly Collection*.

It's a most fitting tribute to a beautiful man and extraordinary musician.

– By les siemieniuk

Sarah Jane Scouten

Confessions (Light Organ Records)



Sarah Jane Scouten's collection of southern Gothic tales punctuated by screaming guitars and a huge dollop of musical tension makes for one awfully powerful album.

Scouten, who grew up on Bowen Island, BC, and now lives in Scotland, has developed into one of Canada's most notable and serious songwriters, with her tales of heartbreak, bitterness, anger, and even self-loathing.

Scouten uses her voice to such great effect. She's totally in your face on *Ballad of a Southern Midwife*, the story of a woman who burned down the



Sarah Jane Scouten

church at the age of three, married a rich man for money, and ended up practicing witchcraft. That song has one of the most memorable organ solos since early Deep Purple.

But she can also be so playful, almost musical-theatre-ish, on *Pneumonia (To Love)*: "Why can't I be happy? They say that I deserve it, I'm a straight white female pseudo-intellectual."

And she's capable of lyrical zingers, such as, "For a woman that's cold as stone is not an object of desire if she won't let you in to feed the fire" on *Breaking and Entering*.

The production by Andre



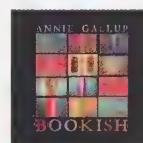
Annie Gallup

Wahl, from the big Hammond organ swells that start the electric guitar-heavy album, is superb. But the album ends on a sweet note, with beautiful harmonies on an arrangement of Lord Tennyson's poem *Crossing the Bar*.

– By Mike Sadava

Annie Gallup

Bookish (Independent)



It's a grey winter afternoon, dirty snow is finally starting to melt, and I'm lulled and inspired at the same time by Annie Gallup's new release. A perfect antidote to the melancholy low light.

Gallup has always had a lot to say. Her songs are like four-minute novellas, about a deserted road in wartime, the wonder and fear inspired by the first-ever satellite Sputnik, the mystery of a child finding it easier to talk to a homeless man than her mother, the vibrant art scene in New York in the '50s, and even a homage to the writer Annie Proulx.

Then there's the survivor who writes under a pseudonym

to protect her next-of-kin. It's a difficult process, "but, hey, they're my birthright, and they're a goldmine and also a landmine, yes, but they're mine."

Her songs would stand up as poetry without music. But the music adds so much. Gallup's breathy vocals combined with her gentle picking on what sounds like a hollow-body electric guitar, all recorded at her house in Maine, make a dozen near-masterpieces. I don't anyone who has ever listened to Leonard Cohen would appreciate this disc.

Unfortunately, Gallup is unable to tour because she has been stricken by the debilitating Lyme disease. We should all hope for her recovery.

– By Mike Sadava

Grant Dermody

My Dony (Thunder River Records)



If you can judge an artist by those they associate with, look no farther than the legendary Dirk Powell and his many roles on this record (adds guitars, organ, harmony vocals, engineers and mixes).

Branded a New Age artist in some circles, Dermody is far from it (both Dermody and Powell rate highly as roots historians), serving up an electric blues album in an old-blues style, with a Louisiana twist.

Known for his warm, wide-open harp tone, Dermody offers a blend of strong originals together with much-loved covers as he teams with Powell (guitars), Jason Sypher (bass), and Jamie Dick (drums), with Corey Ledet sitting in on accordion and rub board and Kelli Jones on harmonies.

The title track (slang for 'my girl') is a simple, harp-driven tune that chugs along, mid-



speed, as Dermody unleashes his plaintive harp skills and raw vocal as Powell proffers breakaway guitar midway through.

Clifton Chenier's *One Step At A Time* benefits from Ledet's lively accordion, nicely offsetting a rather rough vocal by Dermody.

Great bass-playing abounds on Sonny Boy Williamson's *Springtime Blues* and *Morning Train* while Powell turns in strong vocal and guitar work to Dermody's distinctive wall-of-harp on *Too Late To Change Your Mind*.

The comparably funky *I Can't Turn Back Time* proves a highlight while the buoyant *Great Change* erupts with gospel fervour thanks to guest vocals from Rhiannon Giddens and Allison Russell, with Amythyst Kiah on guitar.

Dermody's own *Come On, Sunshine* proves to be the slow-grind, show-stopper—Powell's B3 and Dermody's beefy harp bouncing back and forth with Kelli Jones's vocal contribu-

tions. Overall, another successful Dermody-Powell collaboration—and a release that owns the ground where laidback, put-your-feet-up camaraderie joins with the relaxed spirit of the Louisiana countryside to conjure something spontaneous, memorable, and downright joyful.

— By Eric Thom

The Rough Guide to the Roots of the Blues, Reborn and Remastered

(Rough Guides)



A friend was asked if he was a fan of the blues and his answer, telling—he liked Muddy Waters and Johnny Winter. Although he was not wrong, it underlined how quickly a genre's history can be entirely forgotten, if not be lost forever.

This valuable collection corrects this gap with a tantalizing 25-track trip back through time—a refresher course outlin-

ing how W.C. Handy's "blues" began. Artists such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, who almost single-handedly spurred demand for what would become 'race records' in the '20s, which set the stage for the more relaxed, rough-hewn approach of country bluesmen who refined their craft in the speakeasies, plantations, and street corners of the South.

Work chants, field hollers, and slave songs absorbed elements of ragtime, Dixieland jazz, hillbilly, and gospel music long before the Delta blues was born—which, in turn, gave birth to both Muddy and Johnny as the influence of rock'n'roll would impact the genre after 1940.

Colourful characters all; savour Blind Blake's rhythmic guitar and boisterous vocals on *West Coast Blues* and Henry Thomas's ragtime twist on *Fishing Blues*, featuring his distinctive, fingerstyle guitar.

Blind Willie's raw vocals on *Motherless Children Have A Hard Time* adds bottleneck slide while Blind Lemon Jefferson's *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean* displays his intensity and stand-out skills on guitar, his popularity paving the way for Texas blues.

The country blues of the brilliant Charley Patton, in turn, setting up Delta blues, his impassioned vocals and fluid guitar playing packing juke joints as the genre found one of its first true celebrities.

Or, Hambone Willie Newbern's *Roll and Tumble Blues*, which is all that remains of this rarely recorded sensation, who mentored Sleepy John Estes before meeting his end in prison. This past is more than history. The origins of the blues are the very definition of hard times and the emotions that grew from them. Paying these artists tribute is the only way forward.

— By Eric Thom

Benji Kirkpatrick & The Excess

Gold Has Worn Away (Westpark Music)



You may have heard of Benji Kirkpatrick due to him being a key member of both Bellowhead and Faustus. Or perhaps, as an English folk music aficionado, you are aware of his parentage, him being the son of English folk heavyweights John Kirkpatrick and Sue Harris. Or maybe you've never heard of him at all until you read this review.



If that's the case, then I can do you a favour and say right up-front that you should get ahold of a copy of *Gold Has Worn Away* and play it often and loud.

Kirkpatrick plays guitar, bouzouki, mandolin, banjo, and piano and sings. Pete Flood is the drummer and Pete Thomas is the bass man. Together they create seamless and tight music that perfectly supports this collection of 13 Kirkpatrick originals.

There are definitely some prog rock influences here—I was reminded especially of Canterbury scene veterans Caravan (especially on *Stuck in the Loop*)—but there's enough acoustic, folky moments to satisfy the more purist-of-heart, too.

Lyrically, I detect a general theme of the entropic fading of western capitalism (as implied in the album title) and its impact upon political and personal matters. The songs are both poetic and catchy and there's just a hint of Nick Drake in the way they get into your head.

In Your Cave is the hit single, or at least it would be if there was any justice in the world!

This is an album full of energy featuring great playing and arrangements. It is really well produced and 'rocks' and 'folks' equally well—a rare achievement in the oft-maligned genre of folk-rock.

I can imagine Benji Kirkpatrick & The Excess being the closing act at many a future festival and driving the audience into a rocking and reeling frenzy! Meanwhile, my lucky neighbours are getting to know this one pretty well.

— By Tim Readman

Sue Decker

Outskirts of Love (Independent)



Victoria's Sue Decker has released her debut record and, based on the strong opener, *Lay Me Down In The Indigo*, the lonely strains of her resonator and slight undercurrent of gospel suggests she's a late-blooming blues hopeful and much-needed female entry into the genre.

While her main instrument is guitar, her vocals attempt to make their mark, yet, to be honest, her voice has stronger



elements of folk than blues. Not a problem.

I Don't Want To Say Goodbye is a powerful, laid-back track strengthened by backup vocals (her own?) and the addition of Bill Johnson on guitar. More Linda Thompson than Lucinda, she's got a great feel across all 12 of these impressive originals/co-writes.

Paired with producer, multi-instrumentalist Wynn Gogol, Decker is wisely decked out with a strong supporting cast. Gogol's harp on the opening track and stand-out piano on *The Stain* and *Please, Please Baby* reveal more of a team effort, releasing her from atypical front-person heebie-jeebies.

Her tasteful Dobro on *Too Close to the Bone*—also a strong vehicle for her voice—registers country blues while, somewhat surprisingly, *Silver Anniversary* provides the disc's best track.

Making the most of her strong folk/country leanings, Decker finds her voice against Adam Dobres's acoustic guitar, aided by Gogol's accordion and supportive harmonies.

Tracks including *Black Day*, *White Knight* and the odd, near-Celtic title song only serve to underline the fact that Decker's vocals are not quite

centre-stage-ready, making her choice of material all the more critical to her success—the final track, a positive case-in-point.

— By Eric Thom

Leveret

Diversions (RootBeat Records)



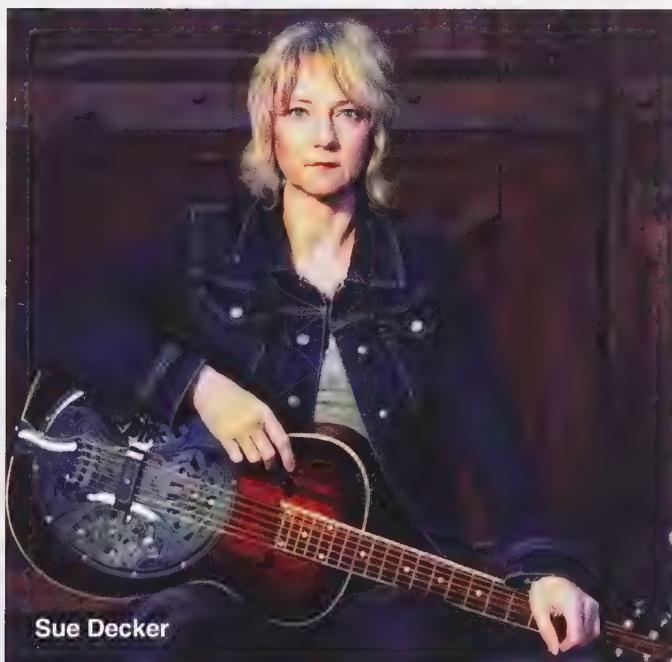
This is the second album by this English group featuring Andy Cutting on melodeon and accordion, Rob Harbron on concertina, and Sam Sweeney on fiddle.

Their first concentrated on original material but here they present traditional material they've dug out from various manuscripts and songbooks.

The key to their sound is the complex interplay between the trio and the blend and balance of their instruments. A typical example is *A Hornpipe*, which starts with accordion melody against the swirling drone of the concertina, with the fiddle adding a bouncy melody overtop, which segues smoothly into the jaunty *Sailor's Delight*.

There's a notable fluidity to the playing and arrangements that causes all the musical elements to combine into a satisfying whole.

If you are looking for English instrumental music that is well



played and beautifully arranged then be sure to listen to this album.

– By Tim Readman

Ayla Brook & The Sound Men

Desolation Sounds (Fallen Tree Records)



There's a glorious, dog-eared literacy at play on *Desolation Sounds* that

might have stumbled off the pages of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. It's clearly a recording full of dark, inventive narrative that's endlessly quotable. How about: "Mamma sold bootleg goat's milk / poppa wore braids and a beard." Amidst the flotsam and jetsam of human accord, the "kings and queens of the small-town scene / in old leather and army green" are "lost in desolation sounds". You can just imagine Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, "Laid out on our backs / to watch the lightening / chain across the clouds / the dark sky brightening/before the rain."

Musically, though, *Desolation Sounds* is a bit of a mixed bag wrapped around freewheeling indie, several variations of blues, from the rollicking

opening title to track, *Lift You Up*, to the captivatingly moody, largely acoustic, *Who Are You*, on which Brook's amply proves his worth on resophonic guitar. While there's no clear-cut direction, there are tasty minor diversions: the wistful alt.country of *Love & Laughter*, and even a respectful take on the old Appalachian warhorse *Little Birdie*. All told, this disc demands resolute attention if only for its electric, lyrical flair. Bless those bearded beats.

– By Roddy Campbell

Kora Feder

In Sevens (Independent)



Kora Feder (rhymes with Peter) is a young, Brooklyn-based singer/songwriter and self-proclaimed concerned citizen. She's a troubadour in the tradition of the 1970s influences such as Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, and Patty Griffin.

Indeed, Feder wears her concerns on her sleeve in her first full-length release. They are, as you might suspect, a cry for change and social justice in Trump's America. Two examples are *Child On The Move*,

which paints an evocative picture of the life of an illegal immigrant "who's looking for a place where she's allowed to be", and *Automatic Times*, which pulls no punches as it takes aim squarely at U.S.A.'s gun problem with a long list of mass shootings while politicians do nothing.

Her tone isn't angry, though. It's wistful and weary and she reminds herself not to get too preachy in *No Answers*, written to remind herself that she may be wrong even when she thinks she's right.

It's not all politics. It's personal, too. Feder pays a loving tribute to her young-at-heart 92-year-old grandfather and his plan to keep living and learning on *He Wants To Live Forever*. She also has a passion for travel and spins some whimsical tales about life on the road in Southeast Asia.

Feder's voice is clear and sweet with just a touch of an edge, a little bit like Iris DeMent with a side of Melanie (*I've Got A Brand New Pair Of Rollerskates*) Safka.

This is a first gem of an album from a young folksinger who will likely create many more.

– By Eric Rosenbaum



The Henwives Tales

The Sisters of Elva Hill (Betty Beetroot Records)



The Sisters of Elva Hill is the soundtrack to a new folk ballet and the brainchild of Derbyshire singer/songwriter Lucy Ward. The ballet performance opened England's venerable Cambridge Folk Festival in 2019.

It is based upon the traditional folk tale *The Two Princesses*. The Henwives Tales is Ward (vocals, concertina), Helga Ragnarsdottir (guitar, piano, recorder, harmonium, vocals), Anna Esslemont (violin, vocals), and Stephen MacLachlan (guitar, drums, dulcimer, bass, electronics), with Claire Bostock on cello and Deborah Norris on glockenspiel.

Mostly, the music was composed by Ward and Ragnarsdottir with the addition of a couple of traditional melodies. Ward handles the lead vocal duties with backing vocals being provided by the ensemble.

It's a compelling story of magic and mystery told in folksong that makes for engaging listening, interspersed with instrumentals that bridge each chapter of the tale.

I can only imagine how it all comes together in the context of a ballet performance, but the music alone had me enchanted from first to last note. Excellent stuff!

– By Tim Readman



Ayla Brook & The Sound Men



À la rencontre de

Skye Consort

Avec ses instruments remarquables dont la nyckelharpa (violon à clavier), le violoncelle et le cistre/bouzouki; la voix d'or de sa chanteuse principale originaire de Suède et un répertoire enraciné dans les traditions de l'Atlantique, Skye Consort et Emma Björling est un quartet unique en son genre.

« Skye Consort joue de la musique folk et baroque depuis 1999 et est établi à Montréal », explique son cofondateur Seán Dagher. « Nous avons sorti une série d'albums de musique galloise, écossaise, irlandaise et française avec différents chanteurs – classiques et traditionnels – toujours en arrangeant des pièces traditionnelles d'une manière nouvelle et intéressante.

« Notre collaboration avec Emma Björling a débuté il y a environ deux ans. Alex Kehler, notre violoniste et joueur de violon à claviers, connaîtait de la scène traditionnelle, et l'a embarquée dans notre projet avec La Nef, un ensemble beaucoup plus grand. Puisque le retour d'Emma avait été annulé en raison d'une tempête de verglas en Islande, elle avait passé trois jours avec moi et notre violoncelliste Amanda [Keesmaat], à dormir sur le sofa. C'est pendant ces trois jours que nous avons eu l'idée de faire un projet avec elle pour Skye Consort. Nous avons beaucoup aimé travailler ensemble sur le projet de La Nef, et elle voulait travailler plus particulièrement sur le violoncelle. »

L'album éponyme de l'an dernier, *Skye Consort & Emma Björling*, rassemble des morceaux variés, dont six sont des airs ou chansons scandinaves. La première turlute, *Herr Hillebrand*, donne le ton avec la voix nuancée de Björling et son accompagnement complexe, très plein d'émotions.

La majorité de la musique est traditionnelle, sauf les deux airs céltiques écrits par Dagher, *The Skunk/Thick As Thieves* et *Cast Iron*, et une chanson contemporaine de feu l'auteur-compositeur-interprète australien Harry Robertson. Parmi les autres chansons anglaises, on trouve la comique *The Old Man From Over The Sea; The Banks Of The Sweet Primroses*, qui est habituellement jouée de manière mélancolique et qui est interprétée ici en suivant un tempo rapide avec syncopes, un air de parade et des maracas; et la chanson de party écossaise emblématique *May The Road*. *La Femme du soldat* est une chanson à répondre française, bien prononcée par Dagher accompagné des harmonies vocales de Björling, qui ajoute une touche suédoise.

« Habituellement, nous obtenons nos sources d'enregistrements historiques et évitons les créations des artistes contemporains. Nous choisissons parmi des pièces que nous connaissons depuis longtemps, mais que nous n'avons jamais enregistrées, et nous leur trouvons une "maison". » La diversité de leurs sources reflète l'expérience musicale et les associations des artistes plutôt que leurs origines familiales. « Emma a quelques autres projets : un groupe suédois féminin a cappella appelé Kongero et le groupe Lyy. Alex joue beaucoup de musique scandinave, mais aussi américaine et canadienne-française. Amanda interprète différents styles traditionnels et est la violoncelliste principale de l'orchestre baroque Arion. Pour ma part, je joue beaucoup de musique céltique, ainsi que française et acadienne. »

En mars, l'électrique Skye Consort donnera quelques spectacles au Danemark avec Björling, et prévoit une tournée de la Nouvelle-Écosse et du Nouveau-Brunswick à l'automne, en plus de son retour en Europe plus tard cette année, et des autres tournées à venir.

« Notre collaboration n'est pas un fait isolé. Emma est la chanteuse avec qui nous prévoyons travailler dans un avenir rapproché et nous avons d'autres projets avec elle. La machine est en marche. » Je l'entends fredonner.

– Par Tony Montague





Un trio de Québec donne à des airs traditionnels des arrangements contemporains intelligents.

Par Marc Bolduc

Apparu sur le radar du monde traditionnel québécois avec un premier album en 2017, la formation É-T-É (Élisabeth Giroux, Thierry Clouette et Élisabeth Moquin) n'a cessé d'impressionner les observateurs du milieu tant par sa vivacité que par sa capacité à imposer rapidement une signature musicale qui lui soit propre. En deux ans, la formation qui mise principalement sur le violon, le bouzouki, le violoncelle ainsi que les voix, a réussi avec une certaine fulgurance, à s'imposer un son unique.

Pourtant, ce trio aurait pu ne jamais exister, mais le hasard fait parfois très bien les choses... et s'il semblait improbable au départ, le groupe s'est constitué au gré des rencontres. Tout d'abord, suite à une «découverte» mutuelle lors d'une séance musicale (jam) en plein-air à Montréal, les deux Élisabeth ont

convenu de jouer ensemble, puis d'explorer la musique traditionnelle québécoise. Entretemps, Élisabeth Moquin et Thierry Clouette se sont rencontrés en fréquentant le programme de musique traditionnelle du cégep de Joliette, ce qui a favorisé l'intégration de ce dernier au duo naissant.

De fil en aiguille, le groupe a présenté quelques spectacles, ce qui l'a incité à enregistrer quelques pièces de son répertoire constitué afin de pouvoir laisser l'album en guise de carte de visite pour d'éventuels promoteurs. «C'était aussi pour montrer que nous étions sérieux dans nos démarches et que ce projet nous tenais à cœur» de dire celle qu'on surnomme *La Moquine*. Cet album, *Le boire des minuits*, a constitué toute une aventure, les membres du groupe se connaissant peu, apprivoisant, de part et d'autre, les univers musicaux de chacun. Pour Élisabeth Giroux, violoncelliste d'expérience malgré son jeune âge et rompue au travail en studio avec d'autres artistes, mais inexpérimentée à la direction de ses propres projets, l'exercice fut révélateur. «Les arrangements se sont fait au fil du temps de façon un peu décousue [...] On a jamé, essayé des trucs, on a appris à chanter et se

connaitre les uns les autres à travers ce processus pas trop clair mais ça a donné un album qui me rend encore heureuse quand je l'écoute.» Thierry Clouette résume la situation : «Nous arrivions avec toutes sortes de propositions de répertoire, de compositions et d'idées d'arrangement sans nécessairement avoir de direction artistique. C'était un processus nécessaire qui s'est étalé sur plus d'un an et demi, comme un long brainstorming. C'est là que nous avons développé certaines habitudes de création et de répétition qui nous ont beaucoup aidé pour la suite». Le boire des minuits, savant mélange de tradition et d'arrangements contemporains a été bien reçu par la critique, récoltant même au passage le Prix Opus «Découverte de l'année» du Conseil Québécois de la Musique 2017-2018, une reconnaissance qui venait avaliser le travail accompli. À cet égard, Élisabeth Moquin explique que « [...] c'est un immense honneur, d'être nommé Découverte de l'année, toutes catégories confondues [...] parmi tous ces grands musiciens, de grandes disciplines et grands talents, ça nous donne un bon coup de pied au .. [rires], ... une bonne tape dans le dos».

Forts de cet accueil et de la rumeur posi-

tive autour de l'album, É-T-É a multiplié les spectacles. En plus de gagner une expérience scénique et d'acquérir une certaine aisance dans l'interprétation, la formation a pris plaisir à jouer ensemble, à mieux définir cette identité encore en gestation. Si pour Thierry Clouette, «avec le temps et notre niveau de jeu, individuel et en tant que groupe, s'est élevé d'un cran», Élisabeth Moquin ajoute que «nous voulions [...] créer de nouveaux arrangements pour notre plaisir personnel et pour évoluer dans notre son et notre musique». Pour Élisabeth Giroux, «On a appris [...] à s'écouter, à donner un bon show mais aussi on a poussé notre style plus loin, on l'a défini. On a été plus rigoureux dans notre travail d'arrangements mais aussi de préparation pour le studio et les spectacles.».

Dans cette optique, la création d'un second album allait de soi, s'inscrivant dans la suite naturelle des choses. De leur propre aveu, Les 4 roses, s'avère beaucoup plus structuré, avec une vision plus claire, avec une direction artistique commune. Elisabeth Moquin expli-

que: «Nous étions bien heureux et contents du premier album, mais nous savions que nous étions capables d'aller encore plus loin [...], de rendre le tout plus complexe, de créer des pièces entières et non juste des suites de reels». Thierry Clouette abonde : « C'est la principale différence je crois entre le processus de création du premier et du second album. On s'est moins éparpillés dans plusieurs directions et ça nous a permis de mettre les efforts et le temps aux bons endroits.» Même si le titre de l'album provient de la pièce «Les quatre roses» composée par Éric Favreau et que la formation a essayé de s'inspirer de ce thème pour élaborer l'album, elle ne s'est pas limitée sur le plan créatif, «nous ne forcions ni ne refusions les compositions. S'il y en avait, nous les prenions et finissions toujours de les arranger ensemble.» reprend Élisabeth Moquin.

Chose certaine, la première écoute des 4 roses confirme cette prise de maturité, tant l'équilibre entre l'inventivité et la tradition semble couler de source. D'un côté, les compositions

dans l'esprit de la tradition (ex: «L'Épineuse») côtoient les pièces issues du répertoire des grands porteurs de traditions (ex : la suite «Majeurs et vaccinés») tout comme leurs textes contemporains (Homme ou Le forgeron) se mélangent avec des chansons tirées du folklore plus ancien (ex: «Tarsil» ou «Le moine Simon») sans qu'il y ait de démarcation nette entre les deux univers, le tout présenté avec dans une grande cohérence artistique. La complicité entre les membres d'É-T-É s'entend tout au long des dix pistes de l'album, presque palpable. À cet égard, Élisabeth Giroux, la membre la plus expérimentée du trio, exprime le mieux cette énergie vivante et contagieuse qui se dégage des 4 roses. «Thierry et Élisabeth ont 10 et 11 ans de moins que moi et j'hallucine de les voir aller. Ils apprennent vite et je les trouve tellement intelligents et talentueux. Ils m'inspirent beaucoup et m'apprennent à chaque seconde passée avec eux. Je me sens privilégiée de faire tout ça avec eux.» Et nous, de pouvoir les écouter.

Critiques

Leveret

Diversions (RootBeat Records)



Voici un deuxième album pour le groupe anglais mettant en vedette Andy Cutting au mélodica et à l'accordéon, Rob Harbron au concertina, et Sam Sweeney au violon.

Davantage axés sur du matériel original à leurs débuts, ils présentent ici des airs et chansons traditionnelles extraites de divers manuscrits et recueils.

Leur son se définit par les interactions complexes entre les membres du trio, et le mélange équilibré des voix et des instruments. *A Hornpipe* est un exemple typique : la pièce commence par une mélodie à l'accordéon ayant pour trame de fond le bourdonnement du concertina, auxquels se joint la mélodie entraînante du violon, qui fait progressivement le pont avec la joyeuse *Sailor's Delight*.

Le jeu et les arrangements remarquablement fluides permettent le mariage parfait de tous les éléments musicaux.

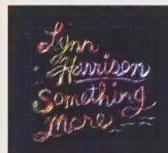
Si vous avez envie d'écouter de la belle

musique instrumentale anglaise aux arrangements magnifiques, c'est l'album qu'il vous faut.

– Par Tim Readman

Lynn Harrison

Something More (Indépendant)



Dans le monde de Lynn Harrison, la vie comporte ses difficultés et ses souffrances, mais si on creuse plus profondément, on découvre qu'il ya a de l'espoir. Les compositions de Harrison s'inspirent d'une spiritualité non confessionnelle. Travaillant comme ministre de culte unitarienne à Toronto, elle ne prétend pas donner des réponses faciles dans ses chansons, mais comme l'indique le titre de son album, elle croit qu'il y a « plus ».

Il est rafraîchissant d'entendre ce type d'idées spirituelles non moralisatrices, même pour les plus athées d'entre nous. Je pense que John Lennon serait d'accord avec elle lorsqu'elle écrit : « Je peux seulement prier pour que l'amour voie au-delà, c'est tout ce que je peux faire quand je n'arrive pas à embellir les choses. »

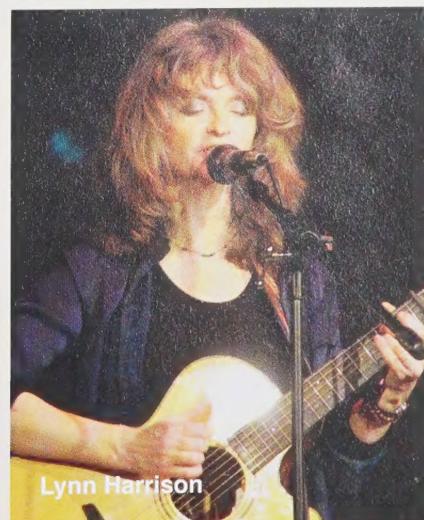
Dans cet album merveilleusement mélodique, Harrison reconnaît qu'il y a plus de questions que de réponses aux mystères de la vie et à toutes ses contradictions. Elle

écrit : « Je ne comprends pas, quelqu'un peut-il m'expliquer comment cela se fait qu'il y ait tant de beauté au milieu de tant de douleur? » Bonne question.

Il y a même une chanson contestataire, qu'on dirait inspirée par Donald Trump : « Avant de découvrir ce que vous faisez, Monsieur, je n'étais pas une contestataire. »

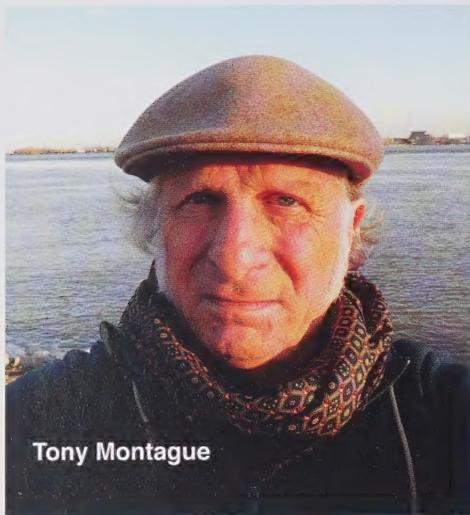
Bravo à l'équipe de production de Noah Zacharin et de Douglas September, qui a fait ressortir la beauté des chansons, particulièrement du jeu de guitare électrique savoureux de Zacharin, débordant de textures.

– Par Mike Sadava



Lynn Harrison

A Point Of View



Tony Montague

Tony Montague reflects on the rich and diverse musical traditions handed down from African slaves.

As I write, it's Black History Month, and I'm home in Vancouver after 15 year-opening days in New Orleans—including Folk Alliance International.

It feels like a good time to connect a few geographic and cultural dots, and reflect on the story of early African-American music.

Most popular music in the West today has black roots that can be traced back as far as blues, ragtime, and jazz. But what came before that? There's a span of 300 years between the arrival of the first slaves in Virginia and the first commercial recordings of black music—three centuries of near obscurity, when very little was written down, yet so much took place.

What traditions did the enslaved people bring with them and keep? How did these converge and change with each passing generation? How did they interface with the music of the First Nations peoples around them, and of white masters and settlers?

While there may not be clear answers to these questions, they lead us to consider the mixed origins of many forms of folk that are normally thought of as white—from sea shanties to old-time fiddle tunes, country, and Cajun.

In sub-Saharan Africa, music pervaded every aspect of life, an invisible glue that bound groups and nations together. All work tasks were performed to songs and rhythms. The violence, misery, and extreme disruption of enslavement and the horrors of the Middle Passage didn't crush the music of early African-Americans—it was one of the only things they were able to bring from their homeland,

and all the more precious and cherished. Contrary to popular belief, some instruments came, too—the slavers and the masters cynically understood that music helped to raise morale and get work done faster and more efficiently.

Relatively few slaves came directly from Africa to the seaports of North America. The great majority were first taken to Britain's Caribbean colonies, Jamaica, Barbados, and islands of the Lesser Antilles where—to use a chilling expression from those harsh times—they were 'seasoned' before being sent farther north. This process could take many years, even generations. The Caribbean basin is where early African-American music was forged.

As a security against revolt, and in the spirit of divide and rule, groups of enslaved men and women from the same nation were usually broken up. A multitude of traditions, from what's now Senegal to Angola and beyond, were forced to find common ground, new hybrids took form, and instruments changed.

The banjo may be regarded as quintessentially American but it first appeared in the Antilles in the late 17th century. Although the drum remained the dominant instrument around the Caribbean, in the mainland colonies drums were banned following their use in the Stono slave uprising of 1739. Other forms of percussion developed to fill the gap, such as bones, sticks, handclaps, and body percussion or 'patting Juba'.

Musicologist Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje has revealed the extent and variety of fiddle-like instruments in Africa. Slave-musicians were able to pick up the European violin with ease, introduced to it by masters and mistresses who wanted free music for their parties and balls. On the plantations of the South, it was quite common to have an African-American fiddler perform for white dancers. In the North, they often worked in dancing schools.

These early black artists playing English, Scottish, Irish, and French tunes laid the foundation for the characteristic swing of so many white traditions in North America today.

Other influences on black music came from indigenous peoples and from poor whites—indentured servants, sailors, dockers, labourers, and the like. But the African core persisted.

As the great collector and archivist of folk Alan Lomax wrote in his book, *The Land Where The Blues Began* (1993): "black African nonverbal performance traditions had survived virtually intact in African America, and had shaped all its distinctive rhythmic arts, during

both the colonial and post-colonial periods."

The War of Independence disrupted the previously steady stream of influence from the British Caribbean to the former colonies. In the early years of the new republic, the first home-grown, distinctively African-American secular music evolved—though, sadly, very little was noted, and later it came to be appropriated by white performers for their blackface and minstrel shows.

In *Love and Theft* (1993), author Eric Lott tells how such acts grew out of a combination of envy, admiration, and fear of black culture. Racist distortion makes it difficult to recover the original African-American songs and tunes but the rhythms were syncopated, the lyrics usually non-narrative and rich in humour and wordplay, and the performance was highly animated. The impact on white culture proved immense, affecting everything from medicine shows to circus and vaudeville acts and, eventually, the recording industry.

Much old-time and mountain music is of black or mixed origin. Folk-based artists such as Rhiannon Giddens, Dom Flemons, and the Carolina Chocolate Drops have drawn attention to the wealth of African-American stringband tunes in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But in the 1920s, the nascent recording industry decided to label and market its products along strictly racial lines—blues was for black communities, country and 'hillbilly' music for whites—thereby creating a segregated audience where none previously existed.

For African-Americans, by this time the guitar had largely taken over as the most popular instrument from fiddle and banjo, which soon came to be identified with white settler traditions. Black styles of playing have persisted, however. In his documentary *Appalachian Journey* (1991) Alan Lomax comments on footage of the late fiddle master Tommy Jarrell in action:

"You see that hand, sliding on that string—that didn't happen in the fiddling from the old country, that's a black trait. And notice how he shakes that middle body of his, there's another sign of the black influence. The source of Tommy's hard-driving syncopated mountain music is among blacks who handle the fiddle like a rhythm instrument and marry it to the banjo to create the hoedown tunes that shake the southern dance floors."

In such ways currents of African-American music from before the blues continue to flow through our hands, our feet, and our voices.

2020 Canadian Folk Music Awards & Weekend Concerts



Canadian Folk Music Awards

April 3 & 4, 2020 at 7:30PM
both nights (doors at 7) -
Delta Prince Edward - 18
Queen St., Charlottetown, PEI



Prix de musique folk canadienne

Les 3 et 4 avril 2020 à 19h30
(portes à 19h) - Delta Prince
Edward - 18, rue Queen,
Charlottetown (Î.-P.-É.)

AWARDS SHOW - FRIDAY, APRIL 3 CONCERT ET REMISE DE PRIX - VENDREDI 3 AVRIL

Performances by/En prestation: Vishtèn, Kaia Kater, Ayrad,
Leaf Rapids, Tri-Continental, et/and Lennie Gallant

AWARDS SHOW - SATURDAY, APRIL 4 CONCERT ET REMISE DE PRIX - SAMEDI 4 AVRIL

En prestation/Performances by: Eastern Owl, Geneviève & Alain,
Gordie MacKeeman & His Rhythm Boys, Abigail Lapell,
Le Vent du Nord, et/and Irish Mythen

1 Night / 1 soirée: Adults/Adultes (19+): \$35 / Youth/Jeunes (4-18): \$20
2 Nights / 2 soirées: Adults/Adultes (19+): \$60 / Youth/Jeunes (4-18): \$30

Additional Weekend Events: Autres activités du week-end:

CFMA Children and Family Music Showcase Saturday April 4, 10:00AM-11:00AM
at Confederation Centre Public Library | Free Admittance.

Vitrine PMFC musique jeunesse et familiale, samedi 4 avril, 10h-11h à la bibliothèque publique du
Confederation Centre | Entrée libre.

CFMA Songwriters Showcase Presented by SiriusXM Canada Saturday April 4, 1:00PM-2:30PM
at The Guild, 111 Queen St. | \$25.

Vitrine PMFC auteurs.trices/compositeurs.trices présentée par SiriusXM Canada, samedi 4 avril, 1
3h-14h30 à The Guild, 111 rue Queen | 25 \$.

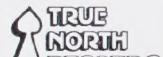
CFMA Traditional Music Showcase Saturday April 4, 3:00PM-4:30PM at The Pourhouse at The Old Triangle,
189 Great George St. | \$20.

Vitrine PMFC musique traditionnelle, samedi 4 avril, 15h-16h30 à The Pourhouse at The Old Triangle,
189 rue Great George | 20 \$.

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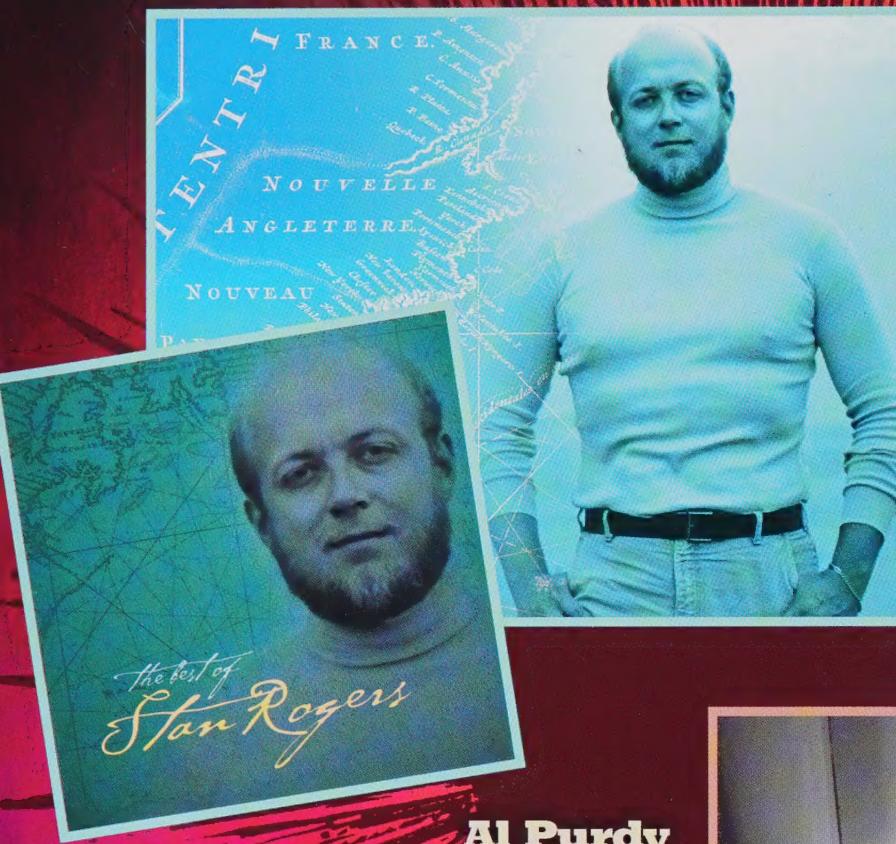
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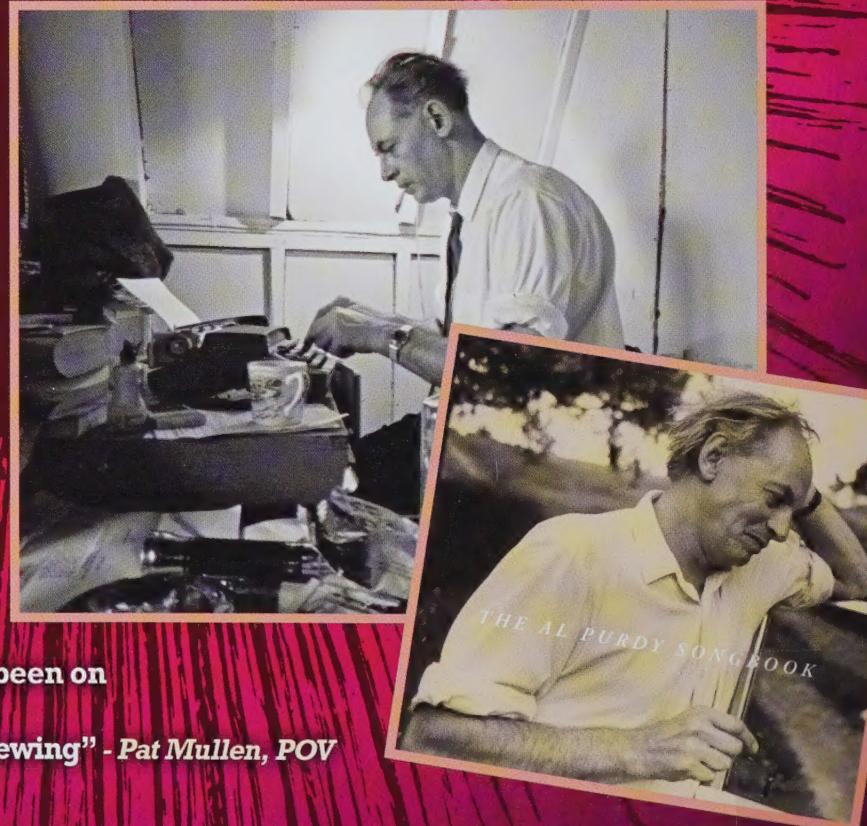
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